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PLAIN REASONS FOR BEING A CHRISTIAN.

To which is ſubjoined,

A

CATECHISM, &c.

Be ready always to give an anſwer to every man that aſketh you a reaſon of that hope that is in you, with meekneſs and fear, 1 Pet. iii. 15.

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PLAIN REASONS

FOR BEING A

CHRISTIAN.

INTRODUCTION.

AS I was born of parents, who bear the Chriſtian name, and was inſtructed by em from my earlieſt infancy in the principles nd duties of Chriſtianity, though this in itſelf , no reaſon why I ſhould believe and ſubmit it; yet I think in gratitude to them for their re in my education, and from the deference owe to their natural authority over me, I am und to examine the religion in which they ve brought me up, that I may know whe- r it be conſiſtent with the truth and reaſon things, and conſequently worthy my accep- ion and belief.

I am, indeed, abundantly perſuaded, that

religion ought to be my own free and rationa
choice, and that conviction, and not human au
thority, muſt be the rule of my judgment con
cerning it: and as I was directed by my pa
rents to examine and judge for myſelf, an
find the Chriſtian religion in particular appea
ing to the reaſon and conſciences of mankin
I have endeavoured to make the moſt impartia
enquiry I am capable of; and upon the ſtric
eſt examination.

I. The reaſon of my mind tells me, tha
there is a God, *i. e.* an eternal, all-perfect b
ing, the original cauſe and preſerver of a
things, the great author of all the relations a
dependences of things upon each other, t
Creator, Proprietor, and therefore natur
Lord and Governor of all the reaſonable cre
tion.

From hence it follows, that all creatur
who are capable of underſtanding their deriv
tion from him, their dependence on him, a
their relation to him, are indiſpenſibly and n
ceſſarily obliged to pay him thoſe acknowled
ments and ſervices, which reſult from, and a
ſuitable and proper to their reſpective circu
ſtances and conditions.

And by conſequence religion, *i. e.* the w
ſhip and ſervice of God, is the neceſſary d
of every reaſonable creature, and ought to
ma

maintained and kept up in the world; and every man in particular is bound to make choice of that religion, which appears to him most consonant to reason, and to carry in it the most evident marks of its being from God, and most agreeable to his nature and will.

II. As I find that religion is the necessary duty of every reasonable creature, I am farther convinced of my obligation to make use of all the helps I can, to understand wherein the nature of it doth consist. And upon enquiry, I can think but of two ways by which I can come to the knowledge of it; and these are either the dictates of my own mind, and reason, or some informations, discoveries and revelations from God, the great object of my religious worship.

The reason of my mind is that which renders me capable of discerning what is fit and unfit in disposition and behaviour, arising from the relations of things; and from hence I derive the notion, and infer the reality of *moral* obligation. And when I farther consider the first independent mind as the author of these relations, and fitnesses which arise from them, I am convinced that it is his will that I should act suitably to them, and that I offend when I do not; and from hence I infer the certainty of *religious* obligation. And since this moral and religious obligation owes its rise only to

my reflections upon the nature of man, and the relations I ſtand in to God and other beings; this is properly *natural religion*, or the religion of nature.

Now, though the religion of nature be prior to and diſtinct from revealed religion, and gives the characters by which we are to judge of the truth of revelation; yet the expediency of a divine revelation, to lead men into a due knowledge of the principles, duties, and advantages of religion, appears;

From that groſs ignorance of God, and duty, which ſprung from the general corruption and degeneracy of mankind; which renders it highly improbable that any one in ſuch circumſtances ſhould ariſe, who ſhould be able to make the neceſſary diſcoveries of God and his perfections, and with clearneſs and ſolidity to repreſent mens obligations in their proper extent and compaſs; at leaſt not without thoſe mixtures of weakneſs and ſuperſtition, which might occaſion the vicious and prejudiced to diſregard his inſtructions, and thus abate the general ſucceſs of them.

But if we could ſuppoſe his doctrines to be pure and unmixed, it is not probable, they would have a general or indeed any conſiderable influence over the ſtrong biaſs that vice univerſally practiſed had given to men, with

out the marks of a proper authority to awaken them to conſideration; eſpecially as thoſe doctrines could not but want the motives and encouragements proportionate to ſuch an effect.

'Tis indeed probable, that in ſuch a ſituation men might be led to ſee, that by acting contrary to the reaſon and fitneſs of things they had offended the firſt and moſt perfect mind; the natural conſequence of this would be fear of puniſhment. This fear muſt be infinite and boundleſs, as the power of God is conceived to be unlimited, and as the nature and duration of the puniſhment would be abſolutely unknown. A conſideration highly unfavourable to all endeavours to break off their ſinful habits, and attain to the contrary habits of virtue.

However, if we could ſuppoſe men by ſuch a fear of puniſhment perſuaded to repentance, *i. e.* to ceaſe from acting contrary to the fitneſs of things, and to conform themſelves for the future to it; their former violation of this unalterable law of reaſon would remain, and cannot in ſtrict ſpeaking be undone by any better behaviour afterwards; and of conſequence their fears of puniſhment muſt remain.

If we ſuppoſe that mens natural notions of the divine goodneſs, and the forbearance that God exerciſes in the courſe of his providence,

would lead them to think it probable that repentance would ſecure them from the dreaded puniſhment; ſuch probability would in the nature of things be mixed with the greateſt uncertainty; eſpecially becauſe upon conſideration, men, in the circumſtances we now place them, would find, after all, their deviations from the law of reaſon many, and their virtue imperfect; and therefore there would ſtill be uneaſy ſuſpicions whether it be conſiſtent with the wiſdom of the ſupreme governor, entirely to remit the puniſhment due to ſuch repeated offences.

If we ſuppoſe that men might reaſon themſelves into this firm perſuaſion and hope, that a return to a ſincere, though imperfect virtue would ſecure them from the deſerved evil; yet this will not lay a ſolid foundation to expect that happineſs, and thoſe marks of the divine favour, which might have been hoped for, if there had been no deviations from the rule of right and fit. Here the light of nature is at an entire loſs, and can never give men the neceſſary aſſurances in this important article.

If it ſhould appear inconſiſtent with the perfections of the Deity not to make a diſtinction between thoſe who return to virtue, and thoſe who obſtinately continue to act contrary to the fitneſs of things; yet the degree and man-

manner of doing it will ſtill remain doubtful and uncertain, this being wholly dependent on the unknown pleaſure and wiſdom of God. And of conſequence the light of nature cannot determine, whether an imperfect virtue may not have ſuitable degrees of puniſhment in another ſtate; or if the probability ſhould preponderate on the other ſide, that God would reward a ſincere, though imperfect virtue, reaſon could never aſſure us, of what nature that reward ſhould be, nor how long its continuance.

As every man finds himſelf liable to death, a reſurrection could ſcarcely be made appear by the light of nature probable, much leſs a reſurrection accompanied with ſuch favourable alterations as the Chriſtian religion diſcovers. In a word, if the light of nature could aſſure me of a future ſtate, it could never make me certain that it ſhould be a ſtate of rewards, ſince the virtue of this life is ſo very imperfect, that the other life might prove a new ſtate of farther trial.

But if it could go ſo far as to render it probable, that it ſhould be a ſtate of recompence; yet wherein the rewards of it conſiſt, and how long their continuance and duration ſhall be, it is ſo little capable of giving any diſtinct account of, that the greateſt and wiſeſt of men, who had no other guide but this, appear to

have lived and died in the greateſt uncertainties about them; a full proof that the light of nature is not able to inſtruct us in theſe important articles with any ſufficient clearneſs and certainty. The conſequence of which is, that men would want the proper arguments and motives to become virtuous with ſteadineſs and conſtancy, againſt all the difficulties and temptations of a general and univerſal degeneracy.

III. Since therefore the natural reaſon of my mind appears thus greatly defective, and inſufficient, I have conſidered the other method of diſcovering the will of God, and the principles and duties of religion, *viz.* immediate revelation from God himſelf. And as this involves no contradiction in the nature of the thing, it muſt be poſſible to him, to whom belongs ſupreme and unlimited power. *Shall not he that made the Eye ſee?* He that gave us all our converſable powers, ſhall he not be able to converſe with us himſelf? Shall not the Father of Spirits, who is intimately preſent to every being, have an acceſs to his own off-ſpring, ſo as to aſſure the mind, that it is he himſelf, by ſuch evidence as ſhall make it unreaſonable to deny, or impoſſible to doubt it? If men can make themſelves known, and diſcover their ſecret thoughts to each other, ſurely God can make himſelf known to men; elſe we muſt ſuppoſe his

his power more bounded than theirs, and that he wants a real perfection which they are poſſeſs'd of.

And as this is poſſible, my reaſon farther tells me 'tis highly deſirable, the better to inſtruct me what God is, and what I am myſelf; what I muſt do, and what I ſhall be; to ſave men the labour of a ſlow and tedious compaſs of obſervation, experience and argument, which every one is not fit for, and which thoſe who are, would be glad to be aſſiſted in; to free me from the uncertainties and fears of my mind, that ariſe from the conſciouſneſs of guilt, the ſenſe of my being accountable, and the apprehenſions I have of a future ſtate; to regulate my conduct, and guide me with ſafety in the midſt of prevailing ignorance and darkneſs, the miſtakes and corruptions of mankind, the ſnares of bad examples, and the numerous temptations to folly and vice; to eſtabliſh my hopes, by fixing the rule of worſhip, ſettling the conditions of pardon, aſſuring me of neceſſary aſſiſtance, and promiſing ſuch rewards as are proper to ſupport me under all the difficulties of my preſent duty. Theſe things *the world by wiſdom knew not*; they were vain and miſtaken in their imagination, and their fooliſh heart was darken'd.

And as ſuch a revelation is both poſſible and deſirable

desirable, the probability that there hath been one may be fairly argued, from the universal ignorance and corruption that hath overspread the world, the characters of God as Father and Governor of mankind, the acknowledged goodness and equity of his nature, the sudden and astonishing reformation that hath once been in the world, the numerous pretences that have been made to revelation in all ages and nations; which seem to argue the general consent of mankind, as to the expediency and reality of it, and its necessity to give religion its proper certainty, authority, and force.

If then there be any religion in the world that fairly makes out its title to be a revelation from God, by such internal characters belonging to it, and such external proofs attending it, which are fit and proper in themselves to convince a reasonable and impartial enquirer, and may be justly expected in a matter of such importance; I am bound to acknowledge and submit to such a religion, and to receive it under the honourable character of a divine revelation. And as the Christian religion makes its pretensions to such a character and authority, I have endeavoured fairly to examine the proofs and evidence that attend it, as they are contained in those books which are known by the name of the New Testament, to which Christians

ans appeal, as to the infallible rule of their faith and practice, and the sole judge of all controversies in their religion. And upon the most unprejudiced enquiry, I find,

IV. That there is the highest reason to believe, that these books are authentic and genuine, there being the same, or rather greater proofs of their being written by the persons whose names they bear, and to whom they are ascribed, than any other antient books have, though of the clearest credit, and most unquestionable authority. This is supported by the testimony of many writers, who either were the cotemporaries of the authors of the books of the New Testament, or lived immediately after them; who frequently quote and refer to them, both amongst Christians themselves, who transcribe many parts of them in their works, and amongst the *Jews* and *Heathens*, who expressly mention them as the authors of the books ascribed to them, though they had the greatest aversion to the Christian religion, their interest obliged them to disprove it, and they had all the opportunity and power in their hands to do it. So that here there is an universal agreement, without any contrary claim, or pretension to other authors.

That the accounts they have given us in these writings are genuine and true, I argue from the characters

characters and circumſtances of the writers themſelves. They were perſons of undoubted integrity, as appears by the innocence of their lives, their ſolemn appeals to God, the ſtrict obligations they were under to truth by the principles of their own religion, their inculcating truth and ſincerity upon others by the nobleſt motives, their having no worldly intereſt to biaſs them, and their chearfully ſealing the teſtimony they gave by their blood.

They had the moſt certain knowledge of the things of which they wrote, which were either doctrines that they received immediately from Chriſt himſelf, or the inſpiration of his Spirit; or facts, done in their own times, and of which they were either eye-witneſſes, or principal agents, and which have been preſerved by public memorials and ſolemn rites, that have obtained in all ages of the Chriſtian church.

Their education, capacities, and circumſtances of life, rendered it impoſſible for them to invent ſo rational, conſiſtent and grand a Scheme as the Chriſtian religion contains; they wrote at divers times and places, upon different occaſions, ſudden emergencies, and important controverſies, which prevented any reaſonable ſuſpicions of combination or united fraud.

The ſeveral accounts they give of the people, and affairs of the time in which, accord-

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ing to their own relation, the things they report, happened, entirely agree with other writers of undoubted authority; which is a very ſtrong preſumption of their being authentic and agreeable to truth.

That theſe writings are ſtill the ſame, without any material alterations, is evident from the great value and credit they have been always in amongſt Chriſtians, who ever eſteemed them as the rule of their faith and life, and their comfort and hope; from their being publicly read in the Chriſtian churches, as a part of their ſolemn worſhip; their being early tranſlated from authentic copies, which long continued in the Chriſtian church, into moſt of the known languages of the world, and the harmony and agreement of ſuch tranſlations; from the quotations made from them, ſtill remaining in antient writers; from the conſtant appeals made to them by the various ſects, that appeared amongſt Chriſtians, in all matters controverted by them; for which reaſon they could not be corrupted in any material points, either by common conſent, or by any particular parties amongſt themſelves. So that they have no marks of fraud and impoſture upon them, but are attended with every character of their being genuine and pure; and have been handed down in the main without any adulteration or mixture, through ma-

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ny ſucceſſions of ages, notwithſtanding the violence of perſecution, the ſtrict ſearch and enquiry into them, the errors and corruptions that have been introduced into the church, the intereſt of crafty, ſuperſtitious, and deſigning men to add to, or take from them, and the endeavours of tyrants utterly to deſtroy them, by their own intrinſic excellency and evidence, and the ſpecial protection and care of providence.

Upon theſe conſiderations, I am abundantly convinced, that the books of the New Teſtament have all the evidence which any antient writings have, or can have, of their being authentic and genuine; and that therefore 'tis unreaſonable to call this matter into queſtion, when ſo many other writings are univerſally owned upon much leſs evidence; no man of common ſenſe pretending to doubt of the genuineneſs and truth of them. And therefore, whatſoever account theſe writings give of the nature of the Chriſtian religion, I am bound to receive as the true account, and to examine its authority by thoſe facts, which they relate as the proper evidence and proof of it. Now as I ſhould naturally expect to find in a revelation that is really from God, ſuitable and worthy accounts of his perfections and attributes; ſo,

V. I farther find, to my great ſatisfaction, that the things ſpoken of God in the Chriſtian reve-

revelation, are ſuitable to thoſe notions of him, which I can prove the truth of, by the reaſon of my own mind, and which have been entertained by the wiſeſt and beſt of men in all ages and nations of the world. The light of nature can firmly demonſtrate, and the moſt thoughtful and learned heathens have agreed in, the neceſſity of God's exiſtence, the abſolute perfection of his nature, his immenſity and abſolute unchangeableneſs; his comprehenſive knowledge, his infinite wiſdom, and his almighty power; the rectitude of his nature, his boundleſs and extenſive goodneſs, and his impartial equity and juſtice; his being the Creator of the world; his being the ſupreme Lord and Governor of univerſal nature, and the Father and Friend of mankind; his being a Lover of virtue, and determined finally to accept and reward it.

Now the records of the Chriſtian revelation are ſo far from containing any thing contrary to theſe apprehenſions, that they confirm, enlarge and enforce them. They ſpeak of his neceſſary exiſtence in a noble and comprehenſive way. They deſcribe him as filling all things, and as without the leaſt *variableneſs or ſhadow of turning*. As *the King immortal, inviſible, and eternal*. As having life in himſelf. As the ſearcher of the heart, and knowing all things. As God

God only, *i. e.* ſupremely infinitely wiſe. As irreſiſtable in power. As abſolutely holy. As rich in goodneſs. As juſt in his procedure. As the Creator of the worlds viſible and inviſible. As upholding all things by the word of his power. As the obſerver of mens actions, a lover of their virtue, and ready to aſſiſt them in it and reward it. It gives the nobleſt repreſentations of his claims of worſhip and obedience from all his reaſonable creatures, of his peculiar love to mankind, and his eſpecial favour to all the virtuous and good. It deſcribes him to our minds as ſeated on his throne of grace, as ſending a perſon of the higheſt character, to lead men, by his example and inſtructions, to knowledge and piety, to peace of conſcience and eternal happineſs. As diſpenſing by him pardon to the penitent, comfort to the afflicted, hope to the miſerable, and life to ſinners under the condemnation of ſin and death. As having appointed a day for univerſal judgment, as judging all in righteouſneſs according to their deeds, and the advantages they enjoy, as the final puniſher of the impenitently wicked, and as the everlaſting portion and reward of all, who *by a patient continuance in well-doing, ſeek after glory, honour, and immortality.* Theſe repreſentations of God my mind and reaſon highly approve of, and when I read them in the Chriſtian

ſtian records, they awaken my admiration, fill my ſoul with the warmeſt love, and excite within me a becoming reverence and godly fear.

VI. As the Chriſtian religion gives the nobleſt repreſentations of the attributes of God, I farther find that it requires the moſt rational and excellent worſhip of him; the *worſhippers whom the Father* declares he *now ſeeks*, being ſuch only as *worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth.* The rule of the goſpel extends only to decency and order, but contains no directions about external pomp and pageantry. The method of worſhip it preſcribes is not ſo much by poſitives rites and ceremonies, that have no intrinſic worth and excellency in them; as by a ſteady belief and worthy apprehenſions of his perfections and providence, by fervent love, by reverence and godly fear, by hope in his mercy, by ſubmiſſion to his will, by the ſacrifice of a broken and contrite heart, by gratitude, adoration, and praiſe, and by fervent humble ſupplication and prayer. In a word, by the exerciſe of all holy diſpoſitions, by purity of ſoul, and a conſtant careful imitation of God in all the virtues of an holy life.

I find all the writings of the New Teſtament abound with precepts of this kind; and as to ſuch poſitive inſtitutions as are enjoined by it, they are but few, and theſe not burthenſome in their

their observance, not pompous and costly, not tending to and encouraging of superstition; but plain and significant, designed either to represent the peculiar purity of the Christian profession, when men take it on them, or as memorials to perpetuate the remembrance of those important facts, upon the certainty and knowledge of which the authority and efficacy of Christianity doth entirely depend: and at the same time suited in every part of them to promote the purposes of piety and universal fervent charity; appointed as obligations upon men to be more careful and exemplary in their behaviour, and to abound in all the virtues of a good life; and to assure them on the part of God, that if they act agreeable to their obligations and profession as Christians, they shall be made partakers of the most valuable and durable blessings in his everlasting kingdom and glory.

And though these institutions are supported by the authority of an express command, yet in order to prevent all possible abuse of them, the Christian religion farther expressly declares, that whatever claims men may hereafter make to the rewards of a better world, from their having worn the name of Christ, or enjoyed the external privileges of his religion, they shall not be accepted upon this foundation; but that they themselves shall be rejected, if they are found workers

workers of iniquity; and that none but ſuch as fear God and work righteouſneſs, ſhall receive the recompence of righteouſneſs and glory.

And therefore I am pleaſed farther to obſerve, that as the Chriſtian religion places the worſhip of God in the exerciſe of ſuitable affections, and in the regular piety and virtue of a good life, it farther lays down and inculcates ſuch rules and precepts of ſubſtantial holineſs, as are reaſonable in themſelves, perfect in their kind, and well approved of by my judgment and conſcience. Such which I find are in their nature, conducive to promote the health, the honour, the reputation, the uſefulneſs, the worldly proſperity, the peace and ſatisfaction of every individual perſon living and dying; ſuch which are ſuited to the particular ſtations, characters, and circumſtances of men in life; and which are therefore calculated to promote the ends of civil government, and the peace and welfare of civil ſociety; enjoining all to cultivate and maintain the moſt fervent charity and love, to be merciful in diſpoſition and practice, to follow the things that make for peace, not to receive men to doubtful diſputations, not to cenſure or judge one another upon account of differences in opinions, but that ſuch as are ſtrong ſhould bear with the weak, and all endeavour to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond

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of peace; doing good for evil, loving and praying for our enemies, and chearfully forgiving offences and injuries against us. So that however Christianity may have been abused by some, to support a secular interest, I am abundantly convinced 'tis not from any tendency of its precepts to disturb the order of civil government, or alter the constitution and form of it amongst any nations of the world; the great view of it being to engage men to govern their passions, to be of the most just, generous and friendly dispositions to others, to discharge the duties of their respective stations, either employing themselves in honest labours, or public services; magistrates ruling diligently as ministers of God for good, and subjects living quiet lives in all godliness and honesty.

VII. As the worship which the Christian religion enjoins is thus worthy of God, and all its precepts for the conduct of life thus rational and perfect; so I farther find the motives it proposes are weighty and sufficient, if duly considered and attended to, to determine men in the choice of that course which it recommends, all of them worthy the perfections of the blessed God, and suited to the circumstances of his degenerate, offending, and guilty creatures.

The assurance of pardon through the blood of Christ, and of the assistance of his good Spirit

rit under all the difficulties of our present du-
y, are exceedingly favourable, and carry in
hem the noblest encouragement to obnoxious
nd disabled sinners, when they entertain the
houghts of returning to God their sovereign
nd happiness; and indeed absolutely necessary
o reconcile them to, and render them success-
ul in such an attempt. For what heart can
ny one have to begin the difficult work of
reaking off his sins, and to enter upon a life of
oliness; or what prospect of success, but un-
er the comfortable assurance that his past of-
ences shall be forgiven, and that he shall re-
eive all necessary assistances from God for the
uture, in struggling with the difficulties that
ttend the practice of virtue?

The intercession of so compassionate and
owerful a friend with God, as *Jesus Christ* is
epresented to be, is a very firm ground of sup-
ort, and inspires considerate minds with a chear-
l hope of having their persons and services ac-
epted, and of receiving all the necessary sup-
orts and blessings of life, whatever opposition
ey may meet with from the enemies of true
ligion, and even though they should be ex-
osed to the severest persecutions upon account
f their adherence to it.

The prospect and full assurance of his com-
g to raise the dead, and judge the world, and
give

give eternal life, to reward his faithful follow-
ers with everlasting happiness, and to punish the
wicked with an everlasting destruction, is an ar-
gument abundantly sufficient to persuade men
immediately to enter upon the ways of holiness
and virtue, and to engage them to persevere in
them with chearfulness to the last. Especially
considering, that good men are assured that all
the inconveniencies of life shall be made tolera-
ble and useful to them, and death, the dread
of nature, shall be their introduction into rest
and the commencement of their felicity. In a
word, the gospel sets before men every consi-
deration to encourage virtue, and deter from
vice, and gives them particularly such assuran-
ces of retributions in the other world, as that
no stronger motives whatsoever can be desired
or needed to make them wise, and good, and
happy, if they will but suffer them to have their
proper and natural influence upon their minds.

VIII. As the gospel-precepts of religion and
virtue, and the motives set before men to en-
gage them to the love and practice of it, are
worthy of God, and suitable to their circum-
stances and desires, so the peculiar doctrines of
Christianity relating to *Jesus Christ*, the great
author and dispenser of it, are such as demand
the highest regard; such as no founder of any
other religion could ever pretend to, and yet
such

ſuch as are entirely conſiſtent with the principles of natural religion, and all the certain diſcoveries of reaſon; ſuch as are ſublime and grand in themſelves, uniform and conſiſtent with each other, plain and intelligible in the main and eſſential points; and ſuch as add great ſtrength and force to natural religion, as they have an entire and abſolute tendency to promote godlineſs and virtue.

Thus 'tis declared of him, that he was before the formation of the world, the word that was with God, and God, the brightneſs of his Father's glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon, that the Father by him created all things, that by him all things conſiſt; that he came down from a ſtate of heavenly glory to be made fleſh, and dwell amongſt us; that he came from the very boſom of his Father, and had that perfect and complete knowledge of his Father's will, that no other meſſenger from him ever had, or could have; that to enable him the better to reveal it to mankind, he had a body miraculouſly prepared for him, which was conceived, and born without ſin, but in all ſinleſs infirmities like unto his Brethren, in the preſent ſuffering, afflicted ſtate of the human nature; that in this body he choſe ſuch a condition of life, as gave him an opportunity of converſing moſt familiarly with all ſorts of

perſons, became an example of the moſt perfect purity and goodneſs, by his own lowlineſs and meekneſs diſgracing the pride and paſſions of the world, and teaching men to place all real excellency and greatneſs, in honouring the great God and Father of all, and doing good to their fellow-creatures, even to the worſt and meaneſt of mankind.

That ſo much greatneſs ſhould condeſcend to put on ſuch a veil, and ſo glorious a being give ſuch amazing proofs of goodneſs, is beyond all parallel. It is indeed peculiar to the character of *Jeſus Chriſt*, to be poſſeſſed of the glories of the Deity, and yet to ſtoop to the loweſt ſtate of human nature; to be Lord of lords, and yet the meekeſt humbleſt man, that ever dwelt on earth; to appear amongſt men under the form of a ſervant, and to be made of no reputation, and yet at the ſame time to be honoured by a voice from heaven, declaring, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed.*

However, notwithſtanding this amazing condeſcenſion, great humility, and meanneſs of outward form, he is repreſented as aſſuming an authority worthy the Son of God; an authority and right to ſettle the terms of men's acceptance with God, according as he had received power from his Father; an authority to for-

forgive ſins on earth, ſo as that they ſhould be forgiven in heaven, and ſo to retain ſins, as that they ſhould remain unpardonable in a future ſtate; an authority and power to ſend the Spirit of his Father, and conſtitute him the prime miniſter of his kingdom amongſt men; that by his extraordinary and miraculous gifts he might confirm the goſpel, and make it ſucceſsful upon its firſt publication; and afterwards in every age, continually accompany it with ſuch impreſſions on the hearts of men, as in the efficacy and deſign of them, ſhould correſpond to thoſe more extraordinary gifts, which were poured out on Chriſtians in common at their firſt embracing the goſpel: and finally, an authority to raiſe the dead, and judge them when reſtored to life; to ſend all the workers of iniquity into everlaſting puniſhment, and to reward all who ſincerely believe in him and obey him, with eternal happineſs.

But notwithſtanding theſe high pretenſions, 'tis farther declared of him; that he died the ignominious and accurſed death of the croſs, that he died a ſacrifice for the ſins of the world, that by his death he drew all men to himſelf, and brought to paſs that great myſtery of calling in the *Gentiles*, taking away the difference between them and the *Jews*, making them one houſhold and family; thus founding his king-

dom upon his own blood, and not on the blood of his enemies and oppoſers.

But though he died to anſwer theſe ends, yet the ſame records teſtify, that in ſpite of all the malice and oppoſition of his enemies, he roſe again the third day, effectually to remove the offence and ſcandal of his own croſs, and to give an exemplary and ſure proof of the reſurrection of others by his power, at the end of the world: That after his reſurrection he abode forty days on earth, to ſettle the affairs of his kingdom with his diſciples, commanding them to preach the goſpel, ſending them forth in ſuch a ſtyle of majeſty, as could never be equalled by any earthly monarch, or author of any other revelation: *All power is given me in heaven and in earth;* and aſſuring them that the terms upon which they ſhould declare men acquitted or condemned, partakers of eternal life or death, under the infallible conduct of his Spirit, ſhould be ratified and confirmed in heaven: in this ſenſe intruſting them with, not only the erection and ordering his kingdom upon earth, but alſo with the keys of heaven and hell.

After this commiſſion granted to his apoſtles, 'tis declared of him, that in their preſence he aſcended into the heavens, a cloud receiving him out of their ſight, leading captivity

vity captive, triumphing over thoſe powers of darkneſs, whoſe works he came into the world to deſtroy, ſpoiling thoſe principalities and powers, thoſe ſpiritual wickedneſſes in high places; that he was ſeated on his Father's right-hand, angels being made ſubject to him, and the god of this world, the ſpirit that works in the children of diſobedience, being put under his feet, and reſerved by him to be finally bruiſed at the judgment of the great day.

And laſtly, the ſame records that give an account of his inveſtiture with this high dignity and office, do with great conſiſtency and propriety declare, that the Father hath committed all judgment to him, that all ſhall appear before his judgment-ſeat; that when he ſhall come to execute this important truſt, he ſhall appear in his own glory, and in his original form of God, all the holy angels attending him, and ſolemnly waiting round his tribunal. That then he ſhall be ſeated on the throne of his glory, that he ſhall be ſeated on the throne of his glory, that he ſhall ſeparate them one from another on his right-hand, and on his left, paſs ſentence on them, and thereby determine their everlaſting ſtate; that the wicked ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment, and the righteous be adjudged to life eternal; that he ſhall preſent them blameleſs

before his Father's glory, and that as the concluſion of all, he himſelf ſhall lay down all rule, and all authority and power, deliver up the kingdom to God even the Father, become ſubject unto him who put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

A ſcheme ſo ſublime and grand, ſo conſiſtent with the prerogatives of the great God, ſo ſuitable to the high dignity and infinite merits of the Son of God, ſo calculated to awaken men to virtue and piety, carries in it all the characters of probability and truth, and highly deſerves the moſt attentive conſideration and regard.

IX. As theſe peculiar doctrines of Chriſtianity carry their own recommendation along with them, and appear worthy to be received for their intrinſic excellency, ſo they come to us attended with many clear and convincing demonſtrations, that it is the will of God we ſhould regard them as truths coming from him, and revealed to us by his ſpecial order and appointment. for our recovery, improvement and perfection.

Jeſus of *Nazareth*, the perſon from whom theſe doctrines receive their general name, and are called *Chriſtian*, was called the *Chriſt*, becauſe he made pretenſions to a divine miſſion, and always thought and ſpoke of himſelf as *anointed* and impowered by God to make theſe diſcoveries of his will to men, declaring himſelf

ſelf the Son of God, and that perſon whom the Jews, with whom he lived and converſed, had been all along trained up and taught to look for. And of the truth of theſe pretenſions he gave ſufficient evidence to every unprejudiced and attentive obſerver.

It was very wiſely ordered, that juſt before his appearance in the world, there ſhould ariſe one who ſhould prepare men for his coming, and give notice of his approach. This *John the Baptiſt* did, preaching in the ſpirit and power of *Elias*, and ſaying, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord;* and though he did no miracle, yet by his virtuous and ſtrict deportment, his ſelf-denial, his pathetic exhortations, his bold and impartial admonitions and reproofs, he obtained the character of a great prophet. This man bare witneſs concerning Jeſus, and the things he ſaid of him could not but attract the eyes of men towards him, and raiſe great expectations from him; and the gradual accompliſhment of ſeveral things which *John* had foretold of him was at leaſt ſome evidence that Jeſus was a very extraordinary perſon, and was ſuited to keep every honeſt and impartial mind open to any farther proofs that Jeſus might produce of his pretenſions and miſſion from God.

And of theſe he gave many during his life and miniſtry that were beyond all reaſonable

exception. He wrought many great miracles, *i. e.* did many things evidently and confeſſedly above all human power and ſkill to effect. He healed the ſick, and cured all manner of diſeaſes, ſuch as by all the art and efficacy of medicine had been found incurable; inveterate palſies and lunacies. He opened the ears of the deaf, looſed the tongues of the dumb, made the lame to walk, rendred the maimed perfect, opened the eyes of thoſe that had been born blind, and raiſed the dead. Theſe amazing works he performed in an inſtant, even by the ſpeaking of a word, in the cities and towns of the country where he lived, in places of the moſt public reſort, before multitudes of his enemies as well as friends, and at ſuch ſeaſons, and at ſuch particular places, on the ſabbath, and in the ſynagogues, as he well knew would occaſion the moſt critical and narrow enquiry into all the circumſtances of the facts. All theſe things he performed without any oſtentation or vain-glory. In all his moſt public miracles there was always ſome circumſtance or other, which plainly ſhewed that they were intended for the conviction of thoſe who ſaw them, and not to gain applauſe to himſelf.

But beſides theſe extraordinary works, he anſwered all thoſe characters which the prophets of former ages had given of the Meſſiah.

As

As he was promiſed under the character of *a prophet like unto* Moſes, but whoſe office was to be more general and extenſive than that of *Moſes*, as one who was to be *a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of his people* Iſrael; he accordingly came furniſhed and commiſſioned to inſtruct all mankind, *Jew* and *Gentile*, in every important truth, that they were concerned to know, in order to their obtaining the divine acceptance, and the happineſs of a future ſtate; commanding all nations to be diſciples, taught and proſelyted, that *all men might come to the knowledge of the truth, and be ſaved.*

As he was foretold under the character of a king, as *the Son of man*, to whom ſhould *be given a kingdom, dominion, and power*; ſo *Jeſus* came aſſerting his right to a kingdom, ſetting up the kingdom of God, amongſt men, and claiming and exerciſing a rightful authority over their hearts and conſciences.

As he was deſcribed under the character of a prieſt, who was to make *his ſoul an offering for ſin*; ſo he is declared to be *an high prieſt over the houſe of God*, to have *put away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf*, and to be *able to ſave, to the uttermoſt, all that come unto God by him, becauſe he lives to make interceſſion for them.*

He appeared juſt at that time when a per-

ſon of ſuch a character was generally and reaſonably expected; juſt as the ſceptre was departing from *Judah*, and at the period fixed and determined by the prophecy of *Daniel*.

He came of the nation, tribe, and particular family, from which it was propheſied he ſhould deſcend, being of the ſeed of *Abraham*, the tribe of *Judah*, and houſe of *David*; and by a wonderful interpoſition of Providence born at *Bethlehem*, the place from whence was to *come forth he who was to be Ruler in* Iſrael.

When he appeared and converſed amongſt men, his diſpoſition and behaviour were ſuited both to the character he ſuſtained, and to the prophecies that had been given out concerning him. He was meek and lowly in heart, holy and without blame, ſo that his moſt inveterate and malicious enemies could not convince him of ſin.

His circumſtances in life were exactly ſuch as they were foretold they ſhould be. He was *deſpiſed and rejected, a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief*. He lived in want of many of the conveniencies, and ſometimes of the neceſſaries of life, and was ſubject to reproach, and the moſt ungrateful and inhuman uſage. At laſt he was *led as a lamb to the ſlaughter*, ſuffered death as a malefactor, and was *cut off for the tranſgreſſions of the people*. All this he endured without murmuring, complaining, reviling

viling again, or threatning. His enemies and accuſers, his judges, executioners and guards, his friends and relations, and a numberleſs multitude of curious and inquiſitive ſpectators judged, ſaw, and knew him to be dead. He was taken from the croſs, buried in a ſepulchre, and yet roſe again from the dead, and by this reſurrection he was *declared to be the Son of God with power*, beyond all poſſible contradiction.

During his life and miniſtry he had often mentioned this great event as what ſhould certainly come to paſs, reſting and laying the ſtreſs of his pretenſions upon it; ſometimes in plain words, at other times in figurative expreſſions, declaring how long he ſhould continue in the grave, and in the ſtate of the dead, *viz.* three days and three nights, *i. e.* part of three days and three nights. Accordingly on the third day he roſe, and ſhewed himſelf alive to his diſciples, whom he had choſen to be his ſtated companions, with this particular view, that they might be qualifyed to teſtify the moſt remarkable facts which occured in his life, and that they might be proper and unexceptionable witneſſes of his reſurrection from the dead.

And as they have unanimouſly declared this to the world, there is no juſt reaſon to object to their teſtimony. For in aſſerting this, they

aſſert what they ſo knew themſelves as that they could not be deceived in. They knew the perſon, features, manner and ſpeech of *Jeſus*. They were allowed to handle him, that they might be ſure they were not impoſed on by an airy phantaſm, and deluſive appearance only. They had free and familiar converſe with him, and that repeatedly in the ſpace of forty days. He diſcourſed to them largely on ſubjects, of which he had before his death given them more general hints, and renewed the great promiſe he had made them in his former life, of pouring out his Spirit on them, with this additional circumſtance, that it ſhould be made good to them not many days from the time of his ſpeaking to them.

Upon theſe accounts it cannot be ſuppoſed that theſe witneſſes could be deceived themſelves in what they relate, nor is there any reaſon to think that they attempted to deceive others, by bearing witneſs to the truth of a known impoſture. For as to what appears, they were perſons of honeſt minds, not crafty, covetous, ambitious and deſigning: they had no temptation to invent ſuch a ſtory, or publiſh it if they had not known it to be true. They had no proſpect of gain or worldly grandeur, however ſucceſsful they might prove in propagating the ſtory. The doctrine they taught enjoins the ſtricteſt

ſtricteſt regard to veracity, and the greateſt abhorrence of fraud and guile, under the moſt ſolemn and awful ſanctions. Their teſtimony was uniform and conſiſtent in all the parts of it. If the ſtory had been forged, thoſe who oppoſed and endeavoured to ſtifle it, might eaſily have detected the forgery; the ſureſt, neareſt, and plaineſt way to expoſe the authors, abettors, and believers of it, and to prevent its ſpreading in the world. But inſtead of this, they loaded the witneſſes with hardſhips of every kind. Reproach, ſhame, poverty, bonds, impriſonments, ſcourgings, *&c.* were the arguments made uſe of by their enemies to ſtop their mouths. Nothing of this kind ſilenced them, or made any one of them to retract. They chearfully underwent the ſevereſt perſecutions, and ſubmitted to death itſelf, rather than they would deny or conceal what they knew to be a truth of the laſt importance to mankind.

In ſhort, a teſtimony ſo circumſtanced as this is, in any other caſe, never did, nor ever can be diſputed or diſbelieved, but in any age and place would, and in any time or country ſtill will meet with a general credit and reception from all reaſonable and fair men, without any cavil, heſitation or demur.

As Jeſus Chriſt did in his life-time, and after his reſurrection, promiſe his diſciples, that they

they ſhould receive his Spirit, or power from on high, he accordingly poured it down upon them, in all its extraordinary and miraculous gifts, and thereby manifeſtly proved his aſcenſion to the right hand of power and glory.

Beſides this, the divine miſſion and authority of Jeſus Chriſt is farther eſtabliſhed by the actual and exact accompliſhment of thoſe important events, which he expreſly and clearly foretold many years before they came to paſs.

He publicly declared before multitudes that heard him as well as his own diſciples, that the city of *Jeruſalem*, and its glory the temple, ſhould in a few years be utterly laid waſte and deſtroyed, and that the goſpel which was at firſt offered to the *Jews* and rejected by them, ſhould be taken away from amongſt them, and be tendered to the *Gentiles;* and that perſons of all nations and languages under heaven ſhould receive and become proſelytes to his religion; and that the gates of hell ſhould not prevail againſt his church, but that he would be with it to the end of the world.

Theſe remarkable events, though at the time when he foretold them they were far from being probable, though there appeared no ſigns or tokens that ſhould lead to ſuch a conjecture, did nevertheleſs come to paſs exactly according to his prediction. Before the generation of men to whom

whom he addreſſed himſelf had paſſed away, *Jeruſalem* became deſolate, and the nation was deſtroyed; and the hiſtory of that dreadful calamity, as it is related by *Joſephus*, doth remarkably agree with the prophetic account given by Jeſus concerning it, as it is very circumſtantially recorded by the evangeliſts.

And after the apoſtles had in vain attempted to perſuade the *Jewiſh* nation and people to receive the Chriſtian religion, they turned themſelves to the *Gentiles*, who in almoſt every place, where the goſpel was preached to them, ſhewed a better diſpoſition, and minds more open to evidence and conviction; multitudes of the *Gentiles* receiving the word with gladneſs and all readineſs of mind.

And notwithſtanding the tares that have been ſown, the ſtrifes and diviſions which have been excited and fomented, the declenſions and degeneracy of many Chriſtian profeſſors, the perſecutions with which the avowed enemies of the Chriſtian Church have frequently worried it, and the antichriſtian ſpirit that for many ages hath ſhewn itſelf amongſt the greater part of thoſe who have born the Chriſtian name; notwithſtanding Chriſtianity hath been often moved from one place to another, and in many nations entirely ſuppreſſed; notwithſtanding the objections that have been urged againſt the doctrines

ctrines of Chriſtianity, and the contempt, ridicule, and inſolence with which the perſon and miracles of Jeſus have been treated; yet ſtill the religion of Chriſt continues unto this day, in its external profeſſion, and internal efficacy: not by might or power, but by the Spirit and favour and bleſſing of God, and its own native excellency and intrinſic worth.

From theſe conſiderations, I am even forced to acknowledge and reverence the divine character and miſſion of the Son of God, and to receive his religion in all the parts and branches of it, as a revelation immediately from God.

X. As Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, the great founder of the Chriſtian religion, had this full evidence and ſubſtantial proof of his own authority and commiſſion from God; and that he was a man approved of God, by wonders, ſigns, and miracles, which God did by him; and as he was ſent to publiſh a new inſtitution of religion, not only for one nation and people, but for all nations and people of the earth: ſo the ſame books which ſhew this, farther ſhew that he took care to propagate and confirm the religion he taught, by chuſing the moſt proper means and inſtruments to carry on and perfect it, and perſuade men to receive it.

And therefore, before he left the world himſelf, and ended his own perſonal miniſtry, he choſe

choſe ſeveral perſons to be his apoſtles and meſſengers, who ſhould afterwards publiſh his religion to the world with ſufficient authority, and qualifications for ſo great a work as the delivering a new revelation and rule of religion to mankind.

By a near acquaintance and conſtant converſation with him, they were proper perſons to be credible witneſſes of all his miracles, and in particular of his reſurrection, that great evidence that he was approved of God; and farther to acquaint the world what were the truths he taught, and what were the rules of worſhip he appointed, having had ſuch opportunity to know them by his perſonal and private inſtructions.

To give the greater weight to what they ſhould teach the world as his religion, he gave them authority, by a ſolemn commiſſion, in virtue of that full power that was given him in heaven and earth, to teach all nations, and make them his diſciples, and to enter them as ſuch by baptiſm, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, requiring them to obſerve all things whatſoever he had commanded them. And ſuch authority and commiſſion from one already approved a teacher ſent from God, juſtly gave credit to what they ſhould teach in his name, or declare concerning him, either as

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to what they had ſeen themſelves, or received in command from him to deliver unto others.

But beſides this, their authority and qualifications to publiſh this religion to all nations are evidenced by many other plain and convincing proofs. For they had not only the benefit of his perſonal inſtructions and directions, all the time of their converſation with him, but he had promiſed to ſend to them the Spirit of truth after his removal from them, and that this Spirit, when he came, ſhould guide them into all truths, farther neceſſary to perfect his inſtitution of religion. This promiſe was again ſolemnly repeated after his reſurrection to his apoſtles, whom, being aſſembled together with them, he commanded that they ſhould not depart from *Jeruſalem, but wait for the promiſe of the father*, which, *ſays* he, *ye have heard of me; for* John *truly baptized you with water, but ye ſhall be baptized with the Holy Ghoſt, not many days hence; and ye ſhall receive power, after that the Holy Ghoſt is come upon you, and ye ſhall be witneſſes unto me, both in* Jeruſalem, *and in all* Judea, *and in* Samaria, *and unto the uttermoſt parts of the earth.*

This remarkable promiſe was ſoon after accompliſhed; for whilſt they were together upon the day of Pentecoſt, there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it ſat upon

upon each of them, and they were all filled with the holy Ghoſt, and began to ſpeak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance, though before they had been utterly unacquainted with them. Their minds were in an inſtant illuminated, and filled with a clear and diſtinct knowledge of theſe important truths, which to that time had been abſolutely, or in a great meaſure unknown to them. They had at the ſame time conveyed to them a power of healing all manner of diſeaſes, of doing miracles, even of raiſing the dead to life, of prophecy or predicting future events, and of conferring theſe extraordinary gifts and powers of the Holy Ghoſt upon others; which was ſo commonly done, and ſo well known, that *Simon*, who by his ſorceries had deceived many to account of him as the great power of God, offered money to the apoſtles, that he like them might have the power to give the Holy Ghoſt by laying on of hands.

Theſe gifts of the Spirit of God were ſuch in their nature, as no human power or wiſdom could confer, ſuch as none of the exorciſts or ſorcerers of thoſe times, with all their cunning and art, management and reputation amongſt the people, could counterfeit. They were ſo many and public, as gave the moſt clear and undeniable evidence of the apoſtles miſſion from God

God and Chriſt, greatly animated them in the work they were called to, and contributed much to their ſucceſs. This effuſion of the Spirit was a publick affirmance of their private teſtimony concerning Chriſt, and added the weight of prophecy and miracles to the credibility of true and faithful witneſſes.

But beſides all this, the manner of their inſtruction greatly recommended the teſtimony they gave, and the doctrines they taught. This was in all reſpects ſuch as it became the beſt of men, and the wiſeſt of religions to uſe. Never did men give greater inſtances of honeſty and ſincerity, and a firmer perſuaſion of the truth of what they taught. Never did men appear more diſintereſted and faithful in what they declared they had received from God. In all diſtant places, and on many different occaſions, there ſtill appeared an exact harmony of doctrine, and a conſtant union in promoting the ſame cauſe; ſo that the ſame Spirit of Truth appeared to direct them all, as they had all received the ſame Spirit of Power. Their hearts and lives were under the conſtant direction and influence of the power and ſpirit of real religion. As they had all received the ſame miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, they were all animated with the ſame juſt and regular zeal. All ſhew'd the ſame firmneſs of mind, tempered with

with the ſame modeſty, meekneſs and humility. Their own religion gave them the nobleſt ſupports under the many and great ſufferings they endured; and that no proof of their ſincerity and faithfulneſs might be wanting, they ſealed the truth of the doctrines they taught with their blood, and gave up their own lives to the hopes of that future happineſs, they propoſed in the name of their Maſter to others.

And *Laſtly*, As truth and religion ſtand in no need of artifice and violence, the apoſtles openly renounced all ſuch methods of propagating the religion of Chriſt, directing men to *hold the myſtery of faith in a pure conſcience.* They impoſed on no man's judgment, they openly diſclaimed all dominion over their faith and conſciences, they reaſoned with them out of the ſcriptures, and inſtead of forcing their own interpretations upon them, commended them for ſearching the ſcriptures whether the things were ſo. With all the authority their commiſſion gave them, confirmed by many ſigns and wonders, they yet appealed to the judgments of men by fair arguments, and aimed at perſuading the conſcience by the conviction of reaſon, not to overbear it by the force of authority.

It was indeed highly fit and neceſſary, that when they had approved the religion they taught

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to mens conſciences, and their own authority and commiſſion by ſufficient evidence, they, as the miniſters and apoſtles of Chriſt, ſhould both command and exhort in his name, and publiſh the rules of his religion, as his commands of binding obligation and authority; for this reaſon, that he is the Lawgiver of the Church. Thus the apoſtles acted. When they had firſt proved the truth of their doctrine by fair reaſon and argument, and their own commiſſion by the demonſtration of the Spirit, and of power; that the faith of the church ſhould not ſtand on the wiſdom of men, but on the power of God, it was neceſſary that they who were to publiſh Chriſt's religion, ſhould teach whatever he commanded them, and themſelves command and exhort obedience to them.

Theſe were the methods the apoſtles of Chriſt uſed in teaching his religion, and it accordingly met with ſucceſs beyond human expectation. And tho' the prevalence of an opinion is no ſure argument of truth, yet when principles contrary to mens inclinations and intereſts make their way only by evidence, and the force of reaſon and argument, againſt all methods of long and violent oppoſition, it is a very ſtrong preſumption of their truth, and that ſuch ſucceſs muſt be owing to the power of God attending it. And to ſuppoſe that ſuch

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a religion as Chriſtianity ſhould prevail as it did, and by ſuch means, without a miracle, would itſelf in reality be one of the greateſt of miracles.

XI. From theſe arguments and evidences I cannot but be convinced that *Jeſus* was a perſon ſent from God, and that his apoſtles acted by his commiſſion and authority, and that therefore the whole Chriſtian Religion, as contained in the New Teſtament, is a revelation from God.

As to the difficulties and objections that may be urged againſt its divine authority, I think they are far from carrying in them any evidence or proof. For as to thoſe which are of greateſt weight, they do not affect the truth of the facts recorded, nor deſtroy at all the credibility of them. There have never been any objections offer'd that render it unlikely or improbable, that *Jeſus Chriſt* lived an holy life, taught excellent doctrines, did many great miracles, died on the croſs, roſe again from the dead, aſcended into heaven, and poured down his Spirit on his apoſtles. And therefore whilſt theſe facts, which ſupport the credit of Chriſtianity, ſtand upon this ſure foundation of certainty, I muſt neceſſarily believe the divine authority of the Chriſtian revelation, tho' the difficulties pretended were much greater than they are.

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Some of them may ariſe either from not knowing ſome particular circumſtances and cuſtoms referred to, from the ſhortneſs of the accounts which are delivered, or from ſome leſſer errors, that may have caſt ſome obſcurity on thoſe accounts. But from whence ſoever they ariſe, they cannot invalidate the proof which ariſes from real and well-atteſted facts, nor make me doubt of things that ſtand upon the ſtrongeſt foundation of evidence.

I find indeed that many things, which have appeared for a long while to wiſe and thoughtful men, as difficulties of great weight, have at length been fully cleared up, and I therefore pleaſe myſelf with the hope, that in the courſe of Providence, thoſe things which ſtill remain dark and perplexed may be explained, and ſet in a juſt light, and made appear as eaſy and conſiſtent, as they are now obſcure and intricate.

Beſides, theſe difficulties which are pretended do not in the leaſt affect the main and ſubſtantial parts of Chriſtianity; they do not caſt any obſcurity over the precepts, and promiſes, and principles of the goſpel, and of conſequence do not affect my duty or my happineſs. Notwithſtanding all the Objections that can be urged, I ſtill find that the directions to ſerve God, and obey Chriſt, and ſecure my eternal ſalvation

tion, are very obvious and plain; and therefore I am not under any pain or fear upon account of things I do not underſtand, or cannot explain.

But what is of more importance, is, that the principal objections that are urged againſt the divine authority of the Chriſtian religion, are fairly to be anſwered, ſo as to give ſatisfaction to any impartial and unprejudiced mind. It hath been objected againſt the prophecies relating to Chriſt, that they are to be interpreted of him only in an *allegorical* and *myſtical ſenſe*, and that they are in their nature obſcure, and do not ſo plainly point out the Meſſiah as might be expected and deſired. Whereas the truth is, that though there may be a difficulty in interpreting ſome of them, yet that there are others, which are exceeding plain and clear, have an evident reference to Chriſt, do agree to the circumſtances of no other perſon, are accompliſhed in him, and in him only. And if there are any prophecies, originally relating to other perſons and things, applied to Chriſt, and the circumſtances of his appearance and kingdom, they are never cited as originally belonging to Chriſt, but only as applicable to him in their proper meaning, and the times and events to which they are referred.

When 'tis objected againſt the miracles of Chriſt, that they were the effect of magic, this

appears to be abſolutely impoſſible; for it was never yet heard of, that magicians could raiſe the dead, and do the other wonderful works that *Jeſus* did. Beſides, the end of his miracles was ſo great and good, as a wicked impoſtor and magician can never be ſuppoſed to have in view; and till it can be ſhewn that the Chriſtian religion is a wicked religion, I muſt believe that the miracles recorded in the New Teſtament were wrought by an holy and good perſon, under the immediate influence of God.

If it be objected that ſome of the miracles recorded, are attended with ſome very abſurd and improbable circumſtances, I think this charge hath not, and cannot be proved. And from the late unſucceſsful attempts that have been made this way, I have reaſon to believe, that the more the miracles of Chriſt and his apoſtles are conſidered, they will appear more and more wonderful in themſelves, and more worthy the interpoſition and aſſiſtance of God.

If it be objected, that there is no ſufficient evidence or proof that theſe miracles were ever wrought, I apprehend this objection to be of little weight; becauſe as there is the ſame ground of certainty for theſe, as there is for any other ancient facts, which obtain univerſal belief, they deſerve to be equally credited; and, I think, nothing can be more unreaſonable and unfair, than

than to allow the ſame evidence to be ſufficient as to ſome facts, and to deny the ſufficiency of it as to others, which are equally poſſible in themſelves, conſiſtent with all the perfections of God, and deſigned to anſwer the moſt valuable ends and purpoſes amongſt men.

If it be ſaid that miracles are in their nature impoſſible, I think this can never be allowed but upon the ſuppoſition that all things are governed by, or rather ſubjected to an abſolute and unalterable fatality. Becauſe if the ſupreme and eternal cauſe of all things be poſſeſſed of liberty and power, the miracles recorded in the ſacred writings are as poſſible to him as any other actions whatſoever, and according to my conception, much more eaſily performed than the work of creation, which is a much higher exertion of power, and is, by all ſober deiſts, aſcribed to the will and agency of God; and of conſequence I can never allow the impoſſibility of miracles, becauſe ſuch a notion appears to me deſtructive of the being and perfections of God.

As to the doctrines of Chriſt, if it be urged that ſome of them are unintelligble, and myſterious, I have this to ſatisfy myſelf, that 'tis not much wonder if they ſhould be ſo, becauſe many of them relate to God, whom *none by ſearching can find out to perfection*, and that

this is no more than may be objected againſt many of the moſt certain truths of natural religion. For whoever will enter into the conſideration of the immenſity and eternity of God's attributes, which certainly belong to him, will find himſelf loſt in the infinite and boundleſs ſubject. As far as they are myſterious and incapable of being underſtood, I am ſure that my acceptance with God doth not depend on my underſtanding them; and as far as they are intelligible, they encreaſe my adoration, reverence, and the love of God, awaken and excite me to the care and practice of Godlineſs and virtue; and thus help me on in my preparation for heaven and happineſs.

If it be objected, that any of the doctrines of Chriſtianity are irrational and abſurd, I apprehend this hath never been proved by any of the enemies of the Chriſtian revelation. Many principles which they have endeavoured to expoſe to ridicule, have not been the doctrines of the goſpel, but either their own miſtakes, or the corrupt additions of weak and deſigning men to the ſimplicity of the truth of Chriſt. Other doctrines that have been excepted againſt, have not been revealed in their full extent and compaſs, and therefore can never be proved abſurd by any particular inferences drawn from them; becauſe thoſe very inferences may themſelves

ſelves appear falſe and abſurd, when the doctrines are placed in their full light, and men are rendered capable of clearly diſcerning, and fully underſtanding them. As to others which have been excepted againſt, they have ſtood their ground both againſt ridicule and malice, and the objections that have been urged have had no other effect, than to expoſe their own weakneſs, and to render the principles of the goſpel of Chriſt more evident and convincing.

If it ſhould be objected, that the very poſſibility of revelation itſelf may be queſtioned, I anſwer that this muſt be upon one or other of theſe ſuppoſitions; either that God himſelf, who hath eſtabliſhed the order and courſe of nature, cannot vary from it, or elſe that 'tis not to be conceived how he ſhould diſcover himſelf to any perſon, ſo as that he ſhall be ſure it is God and no other.

If the former be aſſerted, that God himſelf cannot alter and vary from the courſe of nature, which he himſelf hath fixed, it will follow, that he was obliged by ſome external neceſſity to form all things as they are, or elſe by a fitneſs of things abſolutely independent upon his own pleaſure and will.

If the firſt be aſſerted, that God was obliged by ſome external neceſſity, or the agency of ſome being prior and ſuperior to himſelf; this

is to aſſert eternity to be prior to itſelf, and infinite wiſdom and power capable of being controuled by wiſdom and power more than infinite; which is abſurd.

If the latter be aſſerted, that God was obliged by a fitneſs of things independent upon his own pleaſure and will, this will appear equally abſurd; becauſe, if he was under no external neceſſity to conſtitute the preſent frame, and conſequently the preſent fitneſs of things, the actual conſtitution of the one and the other can be owing to no other cauſe or reaſon, but what is in God himſelf, and which therefore cannot be independent upon God; which cauſe or reaſon can be no other than the will of God, directed by the dictates of his own wiſdom and goodneſs. And of conſequence the preſent frame of things, and the fitneſs that reſults from it, is owing to the good pleaſure and free choice of God, directed by the perfections of his own mind; which perfections do not deſtroy any natural power of acting or not acting, but only direct to the wiſeſt and beſt uſe of it. The very eſſence of liberty doth indeed conſiſt in wiſdom to direct, and power to execute.

Hence it follows, that if the preſent frame of things be the reſult of the moſt perfect freedom and choice in God, the ſame free choice will and muſt take place, in every other circumſtance

ſtance to which perfect wiſdom and goodneſs do direct. And therefore if it be agreeable to the dictates of ſuch perfections in God, to vouchſafe an external revelation to mankind, in the caſe of an univerſal ignorance and degeneracy, ſuch a revelation is as poſſible as the original conſtitution of things, and may be accounted for upon the very ſame foundation of reaſon.

But if it be ſaid, that it cannot be conceived how God can ſo diſcover himſelf to any perſon, as that he ſhall be ſure it is God and no other; I anſwer, that ſuppoſing we are not able to deſcribe the method by which God makes himſelf known to men, it will by no means follow, that 'tis impoſſible for God to do ſo, unleſs our conceptions are the meaſure of all poſſibilities. If God be the univerſal Creator, he is ſurely the Creator of the ſouls of men, and hath implanted in them all their perceptive and reaſonable powers and faculties; and of conſequence being the former of ſpirits, he muſt be capable of acting on them, which ſufficiently proves the poſſibility of revelation.

Beſides, if, as the whole viſible creation around us ſhews the poſſibility and great probability of, there are reaſonable ſpirits of natures, orders, and powers ſuperior to ours; I ſuppoſe they will not be thought to be incapa-

ble of converſe, and of communicating their ideas to each other; for this would be to ſuppoſe ſpirits leſs happy than men: And if created ſpirits can thus convey their minds to each other, ſo as that they ſhall be abſolutely ſure who it is they converſe with, can it be imagined that God the infinite Spirit ſhould not be able to convey his will to ſpirits, and reaſonable beings, ſo as that they ſhall be ſure that it is God who converſes with them?

Nothing is more certain than that God, who is an abſolute Spirit, acts on the material world; and yet we cannot tell the manner how God acts upon it: And it is very wonderful to conſider how one nature abſolutely diſtinct, and of quite different attributes and properties from another, ſhould thus continually act upon and influence it. But that ſpiritual beings, between whoſe natures, as ſpiritual, there is a neceſſary likeneſs and conformity, ſhould act upon each other, and be capable of converſing with and communicating their ideas to each other, is a much more eaſy and rational ſuppoſition; and as probable, as that body ſhould act upon body, of which the whole frame of the material world is an abſolute, conſtant proof.

The account which revelation itſelf gives of the manner in which God conveyed his mind to men, is, either by an audible voice, attended with

with an appearance of viſible glory, or elſe by making certain very clear and ſtrong impreſſions on their minds. As to the former way, it is as reaſonable to think that the voice and preſence of God may be of ſo very peculiar a nature, as to be as well known, and as certainly diſtinguiſhed as the voice and countenance of a friend: And as to the latter, it appears to me extremely probable, that impreſſions made on the mind may be attended with ſuch peculiar circumſtances, which may as truly and certainly diſcover God, as a friend may be known by his reſemblance and image, or as though we were mere ſpirits, and God was converſing with us as ſuch.

If it be allowed that revelation is poſſible, it may be denied that it is neceſſary, becauſe the natural reaſon of mens minds is abundantly ſufficient to demonſtrate to them whatever God requires of them. I very readily grant, that the reaſonable powers and faculties of men's minds are very capable of leading them into the knowledge of ſome of the moſt important truths that we are concerned to know, and duties we are obliged to perform; and that men are criminal in the ſight of God, if they run into ignorance and vice, through a neglect to improve thoſe excellent faculties of reaſon which God hath given them.

But then it ought to be conſidered, that the powers of all men are not alike capable, and that though truths of importance when offered to them may be diſcerned and approved by them, yet that the generality would ſcarce ever have been able, by a long courſe of argument and inference, to have reaſoned themſelves into a clear knowledge of all thoſe principles, which are neceſſary to be known, effectually to ſupport the intereſt of true religion, and the practice of virtue; eſpecially if we conſider them as wholly taken up with the affairs of the preſent life, educated with ſtrong prejudices in favour of ſuperſtition and error, and trained up from infancy in idolatrous practices, and criminal courſes. In ſuch circumſtances, what reaſon may be capable of doing, I know not: But that it hath not in fact led men to the knowledge of all the neceſſary principles and truths of religion, is evident from the hiſtory of almoſt all nations, who have been deſtitute of revelation: and therefore to argue againſt the neceſſity of revelation, becauſe poſſibly men's own reaſon might have been ſufficient without it, when in reality they did need it, is to ſet up mere ſuppoſition againſt poſitive fact, and to reaſon from poſſibilities againſt experience and certainty.

Reaſon, *i. e.* men's reaſonable powers are unque-

unqueſtionably capable of great improvements, and of making very conſiderable diſcoveries, with proper aſſiſtance and cultivation. But without ſuitable helps and means of information, I apprehend that no man can affirm they would lead him into the knowledge of all the neceſſary principles of religion. *Cicero*, the greateſt genius of the age in which he lived, did not owe his ſuperior knowledge and wiſdom to himſelf only. He had the writings of *Rome* and *Greece* to inſtruct and inform him. From theſe he underſtood the principles of the ſeveral ſects of philoſophers that were before him, the arguments with which they confirmed their reſpective ſentiments, and the objections that were urged by ſome againſt the ſchemes and principles of others. Upon this foundation it was eaſy to reaſon, and in whatever reſpects his ſentiments were nobler than others, they were not properly the mere diſcoveries of his own mind, but inferences from, or the improvements of the diſcoveries and principles of others. And I cannot help thinking, that if any men are now capable of forming to themſelves a complete ſcheme of rational religion and morals, they owe it to the diſcoveries of the goſpel-revelation, though they aſſume the glory of it intirely to their reaſon.

Beſides, though reaſon might poſſibly diſco-

ver the duties of religion and virtue without any revelation, it cannot in the nature of things certainly diſcover what the rewards of being religious and virtuous ſhall be. Reaſon will indeed inform us, that a being perfectly virtuous, and who conſtantly acts agreeably to the reaſon and nature of things, without any deviation from it, cannot be finally miſerable, but muſt be in ſome meaſure happy in the divine approbation and acceptance. But of what degree and duration that happineſs ſhall be, depends wholly on the good pleaſure of God. Being itſelf is the voluntary gift of the ſupreme cauſe, and of conſequence the continuance of being muſt depend on his will who firſt gave it. And though perfect virtue will always be entitled to a proportionable reward from God, yet that ſuch a being, and the happineſs conſequent upon his virtue, ſhall and muſt be of an everlaſting continuance, can never be proved from the reaſon and nature of things; and of conſequence the knowledge of it can be derived from nothing but the voluntary diſcoveries of God himſelf.

This I think is plain upon the ſuppoſition of a being perfectly virtuous. But if any reaſonable beings deviate from the law of their creation, and act contrary to that fitneſs of things which reaſon aſſures them ought to be the rule of

of their actions; in ſuch a caſe reaſon will be ſo far from giving any poſitive aſſurances of a reward, that it will rather lead men to the expectations and fears of puniſhment; there being as natural a connection between vice and puniſhment, as there is between virtue and a reward. Whether God will pardon, and upon what conditions, whether repentance and a ſincere amendment for the future ſhall entitle to happineſs, and eſpecially the ſame happineſs as would have been the reward of perfect virtue, here reaſon can never determine. And of conſequence, if the certain knowledge of theſe important articles be in any ſenſe neceſſary to encourage the repentance and reformation of men, it is in the ſame ſenſe abſolutely neceſſary they ſhould have a revelation from God concerning them.

If it be objected, that to ſuppoſe the great expediency of revelation which is argued for, will infer that this revelation muſt be univerſal, and extend equally to all ages, nations, and perſons, I think the anſwer is obvious and eaſy. Becauſe, if there be any real weight in this objection, it will prove that God is obliged to be equally kind to all mankind, in all ages and nations without exception. If he is not obliged to beſtow equal favours on all, he is not obliged to beſtow equally on all, the particular favour of an

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external revelation. But if he is obliged to be equally, and at all times favourable to all, then he is obliged to be what in fact he ſcarce ever hath been, ſince the foundation of the world. He is obliged to give all men the ſame natural capacities, the ſame advantages for the diſcovery of truth, and the ſame external bleſſings of his Providence. But is not this contrary to the experience of all ages, and a difficulty, if it be one, that affects the very being of a God, or at leaſt, the wiſdom, goodneſs and equity of his Providence? and which therefore is no more an objection againſt revelation, than it is againſt the firſt principles of natural religion itſelf.

If ſome parts of the world enjoy the benefit of a divine revelation, it can be no injury to others who do not; becauſe as God hath not vouchſafed to them that favour, they ſtand upon the ſame foundation of the light of nature, as they would have done, had there been no extraordinary revelation at all. And as the enemies of revelation do themſelves allow and plead for the abſolute ſufficiency of reaſon in all men, upon their own conceſſion ſuch as have no other guide but reaſon, can have no juſt occaſion for complaint, and by neceſſary conſequence, no claim to the higher benefit of a divine revelation: Becauſe though God ſhould think proper to vouchſafe it to ſome, and not to others, it doth

doth not make the condition of ſuch who have it not, any worſe than it was before, by making any abatement in the natural ſufficiency of their reaſon; but they are exactly in the ſame ſtate, and muſt be tried by the ſame law, as all the world would have been, had there been no other law but that of reaſon and nature. And therefore if thoſe, who have this ſufficient light of nature to direct them, cannot claim a divine revelation by any natural right, there can be no obligation upon God to grant it univerſally and alike. And if God can be under no obligation to grant it univerſally and alike, then it neceſſarily follows; that as the granting it to ſome is no injury to others, no one being injured in not having what he hath no right of claim to, God may grant it at what ſeaſons, and to what particular nations and perſons, the circumſtances of the world, and the ends of his government ſhall from time to time direct him.

The goſpel-revelation was certainly intended for the univerſal benefit of mankind, and accordingly the apoſtles and firſt preachers of Chriſtianity publiſhed it amongſt all nations, where they went. But if the progreſs of it was hindered by violence and perſecution, if ſome thro' prejudice and vice refuſed to embrace it; if others corrupted the ſimplicity and purity of it, till they had, in a great meaſure,

or

or wholly loſt it, and were left to embrace ſuperſtition and impoſture in the room of it; and finally, if others, who have an opportunity of ſpreading the knowledge of the goſpel, do for the ſake of worldly advantages refuſe to do it, the neceſſity of the goſpel-revelation's being univerſal may be allowed, without its being any reaſonable objection againſt it, that in fact it is not ſo. Becauſe this is not owing to any want of care or goodneſs in God, but to the negligence and vices of men themſelves, for which I apprehend that neither the Providence of God, nor the goſpel-revelation are or ought to be accountable.

If it be ſaid, that ſuppoſing a revelation actually given, ſuch revelation can be nothing but a revival of the principles and duties of natural religion, becauſe men's acceptance with God can depend on nothing but their acting agreeable to the law of their reaſon and nature; I anſwer, That if by the principles and duties of natural religion, be meant ſuch principles and duties, which when diſcovered, appear reaſonable to the minds of men, it may be allowed that revelation doth not, and cannot place the happineſs and acceptance of men with God, upon any thing that is not reaſonable and fit for them to know and do, and of which they cannot in ſome meaſure diſcern the reaſonableneſs and fit-

fitneſs; for then one certain mark of the truth of revelation would be plainly wanting, which is its placing the happineſs of men upon ſuch a foundation as appears reaſonable in itſelf, and therefore worthy of God, becauſe I cannot believe that to be worthy of God, which by reaſon I cannot in ſome meaſure plainly diſcern to be ſo.

But if by the principles and duties of natural religion, be meant ſuch principles and duties which natural reaſon, without any divine revelation, will lead men to the certain knowledge of, then the aſſertion is evidently falſe, that revelation can contain nothing but the principles and duties of natural religion. Becauſe, as hath been obſerved, one great end of revelation is to give men certainty of ſuch important principles as natural reaſon is never able to do.

If we conſider men in circumſtances of degeneracy, and as having acted contrary to the law of nature, a revelation merely to revive the law of nature, would evidently be inſufficient for their peace and happineſs. For though this would be a direction of their future conduct, it would be no ſecurity to them againſt the puniſhment due to them for their paſt tranſgreſſions, which would prove the higheſt diſcouragement to their obedience for the time to come. And of conſequence a revelation from God, vouchſafed

ſafed to mankind in ſuch circumſtances, muſt contain more than the mere law of nature, *viz.* the method and conditions of God's extending his forgiveneſs to his ſinful creatures, without which it would want one eſſential mark of its being from God, *viz.* its ſuitableneſs to the wants and neceſſities of mankind.

Beſides, if God hath given men a revelation of his will, attended with ſufficient evidence and proof, the belief of ſuch a revelation is a moral duty, and a neceſſary inſtance of reſpect and reverence due to God; it being as reaſonable and fit, that I ſhould attend to the voice and will of the Supreme Being in external revelation, as that I ſhould ſubmit to the voice and will of God by reaſon or internal revelation.

Upon this foundation depends that command of *Jeſus Chriſt: Ye believe in God, believe alſo in me.* It is poſſible in hypotheſis that men may govern their paſſions, and act well in ſociety, who do not believe the being of a God. But yet to *believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of thoſe who ſeek him,* is a principle of natural religion; and, as I imagine, neceſſary to every man's happineſs in the divine acceptance. And by conſequence, if it be the will of God that I ſhould believe in Chriſt, and if there be evidence to convince me of the reaſon-

ſonableneſs of believing in him; it doth not ſeem more unreaſonable that God ſhould require me to believe in Chriſt, than it doth that he ſhould require me to believe in himſelf, in order to my receiving a reward of grace and favour from him; becauſe if the ſufficiency of evidence be a reaſon for God's requiring belief in any caſe, it is a reaſon that will hold good in every one without exception.

Beſides, if the obſervance of the religion and law of nature be allowed to diſpoſe and prepare men for happineſs in the favour of God, and though revelation cannot ſet aſide the obligations of the one or other, but is principally deſigned to recover men to the knowledge of, and a conformity to the original fitneſs of things; yet I apprehend that revelation may enforce the practice of them by ſuch conſiderations, and motives, and ſpecial precepts, as have no certain foundation in natural reaſon and light, *i. e.* which men's reaſon would never have led them to have thought of, without a divine direction and command.

If the religion of nature be of God's conſtitution and appointment, and reſults from thoſe relations which he himſelf hath been pleaſed to order and fix, I apprehend that ſuch poſitive inſtitutions which have a direct tendency to eſtabliſh and promote men's regard to, and ob-

obſervance of it, may be ordained of God, and thereby become obligatory upon men. Becauſe if the law of nature itſelf neceſſarily and univerſally obliges mankind, and their happineſs depends on the obſervation of it; ſuch inſtitutions which render the obſervation of it more eaſy and practicable, however voluntary and poſitive in themſelves, are conſiſtent with all our notions of the divine perfections, and ought to be ſo far from being objections againſt the truth of any religion that contains them, that they are rather arguments in favour of it, as they are evident proofs of the wiſe and tender concern of God for the perfection and happineſs of his creatures.

If then the peculiars of the Chriſtian religion have all of them this tendency, as I apprehend they have, it follows, that God's requiring us to obſerve them is a reaſonable and fit command, as it is a command reſulting from his unerring wiſdom, and his gracious regard to our welfare and intereſt. And therefore in this reſpect internal and external revelation, or the religion of nature and revelation may certainly differ, and the latter command what the former would never diſcover or oblige to.

If it be objected againſt the Chriſtian revelation, that it is not explicit and clear, but that thoſe who ſearch it fall into very different ſentiments

ments and opinions as to ſeveral articles of importance, and that 'tis ſcarce to be ſuppoſed that God ſhould be the author of a revelation, which, when given, is incapable of being underſtood; I have this that gives my mind ſatisfaction and eaſe: That if there are any intimations of doctrines in ſcripture, that ſincere perſons who do the will of God, and lay aſide all prejudice, and deſire to receive the truths of God, as far as they can underſtand them, cannot, after all their endeavour and care, come to the certain knowledge of, the knowledge of ſuch doctrines cannot be neceſſary to their acceptance and ſalvation; becauſe Chriſt Jeſus expreſly declares, that *if any man doth the will of his Father, he ſhall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or no.*

As to thoſe doctrines, upon the acknowledgment of which the New Teſtament writings do expreſly make ſalvation to depend, I find, to my very great comfort, that they are very plain and intelligible in themſelves; ſuch as the exiſtence of one God, the reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead, and there being one Mediator between God and man, thro' whom God diſpenſes all bleſſings to his creatures. Theſe and other truths of like importance are ſet in the cleareſt light, and if any have obſcured and perplexed them by intricate diſtinctions, and philo-

philoſophical ſpeculations, the goſpel of Chriſt gives no ſanction to them, and the plain Chriſtian hath no concern and buſineſs with them.

If it be ſaid, that the Chriſtian religion hath no better effect upon mankind than the light of nature had, and that therefore it can ſcarcely be imagined that God would be the author of ſo ineffectual an inſtitution; I anſwer, That I ſuppoſe it can never be made appear that mankind are now as univerſally in the ſame circumſtances of ignorance and vice, as they were before the revelation of the goſpel.

The knowledge of one God, the univerſal Creator and Father, doth certainly more univerſally obtain than it did in the times of deep *Paganiſm* and idolatry; the precepts of religion and virtue are more generally uuderſtood, and the rewards and puniſhments of a future life more certain as to their evidence, and more extenſive as to the acknowledgement of them.

And tho' many who profeſs to believe theſe things act contrary to their own principles, yet there have been many in every age, and now are, who, under the influence of this faith, *live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in the preſent world*.

And as to thoſe who do not, 'tis not owing to the inſufficiency of the principles and motives of Chriſtianity, but to the want of conſideration and

and a ſerious regard to them, and to thoſe powerful habits which they have contracted, and continue to ſtrengthen by a wilful and allowed indulgence.

And therefore, if the goſpel be objected againſt as inſufficient to reform men, and engage them to the love and practice of religion and virtue, it muſt be becauſe it doth not neceſſitate and compel them, and lay an irreſiſtible force on the mind to comply with it. Whereas, if this were the caſe, it would be an unanſwerable objection againſt it, becauſe this would deſtroy that freedom and choice of the mind, which is eſſentially neceſſary to give virtue itſelf its proper value, and render it capable of a reward from God. And of conſequence, if the Chriſtian religion contains every argument and motive, that is proper to be laid before and influence reaſonable and free creatures, its not always proving effectual is no argument of its inſufficiency, nor the leaſt ſhadow of proof that it is not worthy of and actually from God.

And *Laſtly*, If it be objected that it hath been the occaſion of ſuch confuſions, diſorders, miſchiefs and calamities in the world, as that it can never be imagined that God would be the author of an inſtitution that ſhou'd be attended with ſuch fatal conſequences; I anſwer, That *genuine* Chriſtianity hath never been the cauſe of

of any of the diſtractions and miſeries that have afflicted mankind, ſince its entrance into the world; though that which hath been ſubſtituted in the room of Chriſtianity too often hath. Nothing is more viſible and plain, than that the Chriſtian religion is deſigned to calm the paſſions, and cure the vices of mankind. And if its principles were but duly attended to, and its precepts heartily ſubmitted to, Chriſtians would maintain the moſt excellent diſpoſitions, and lead the moſt inoffenſive and blameleſs lives; and this world would be, what I pleaſe myſelf the next world ſhall be, an habitation of righteouſneſs, peace and joy. The perfection of the Chriſtian law as to all its moral precepts, and important motives, abundantly juſtifies the wiſdom and goodneſs of God in giving it; and he is no more anſwerable for men's corrupting and abuſing it, and refuſing to act agreeable to it, than he is for their abuſing the bleſſings of his common Providence.

Upon a full view therefore of theſe and other objections, I think they are capable of a ſatisfactory anſwer; and as the evidence for the truth and certainty of the Chriſtian religion ſtands in full force, I think myſelf bound to receive it as a revelation from God, and to regulate my faith, and hope, and practice by it.

And that I might not be chargeable with par-

partiality in my regards and attachment to Chriſtianity, I have not only carefully examined the credentials it brings to prove its divine original, but I have alſo endeavoured honeſtly to compare it with other religions that are in the world, as far as I am capable of underſtanding and judging concerning them; and this compariſon confirms me in the belief of the Chriſtian religion, and encreaſes my eſteem and value for it.

Paganiſm carries in it innumerable marks of its impiety and falſhood. The number of gods it hath introduced, the ſuperſtitions it countenances, the impure and barbarous rites it warrants and preſcribes, are demonſtrative proofs it hath no foundation in the reaſon and nature of things, and cannot be the appointment of, or agreeable to the will of God, the ſupreme unchangeable purity, wiſdom and goodneſs.

As to Mahometaniſm, tho' it pretends to the character of a revelation from God, yet it hath all the evident marks of a real impoſture. The character of its author appears too ſuſpected ever to ſupport the honour of his being a meſſenger from God. His diſclaiming miracles to atteſt the truth of his miſſion, is a plain acknowledgment of the weakneſs and falſhood of his pretences. The few wonderful things related of him appear at firſt view to be fable and romance. His forbidding enquiries into the

nature and principles of his religion, evidently ſhews he was conſcious to himſelf that it would not bear them. His propagating it by the ſword, is proof ſufficient that he knew it would not prevail with the weapons of reaſon and argument. The falſhoods it contains as to matters of fact, demonſtrate the ignorance or wickedneſs of its founder. The indulgencies it gives to the appetites and ſenſual deſires of men, is a ſtrong argument of the badneſs of his own inclinations, and ſhews his reſolution to ſacrifice chaſtity and virtue to the more prevalent views of ambition and power. Many of his precepts are abſurd and ridiculous, and unworthy the nature of true religion. And *Laſtly*, The motives and rewards ſet before men, and promiſed by him to encourage them to embrace and continue in his religion, are ſuited only to ſuch whoſe minds are oppreſſed with ſenſuality, and enſlaved to vice; no way worthy of the known perfections of God, nor any way ſuited to the rational ſpiritual nature of man. And of conſequence a religion thus defective in its evidence, and falſe in its very conſtitution and frame, can never be the inſtitution of God, nor worthy of my reception and belief.

As to the *Jewiſh* religion, tho' this appears to have many genuine marks of its being the appointment of God, yet I find that it could not

not in its nature be intended for the religion of the world, becauſe ſeveral of its precepts were ſuch, as that by far the greateſt part of the world could not poſſibly comply with them. It was an inſtitution peculiar to one particular nation and country, and of conſequence as ſuch never did or could oblige the reſt of mankind. And as it was calculated for one peculiar people, ſo it appears to have been conſtituted for a time only; the books themſelves, which contain the accounts of it, intimating that the *ſceptre ſhould depart from* Judah, that *another prophet ſhould be raiſed up like to* Moſes, and declaring that *the days ſhould come when God would make a new covenant with the houſe of* Iſrael, *and with the houſe of* Judah, *not according to the covenant that he made with their fathers, when he took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of* Egypt. Beſides this, there appear to be various prophecies relating to a more excellent and durable ſtate of things, to commence under the government and reign of a particular perſon, foretold in different ages, deſcribed by various perſons, as to the time of his coming, the place of his birth, the nature of his works, his ſufferings and death, his reſurrection and kingdom, and other remarkable events that attended him. And as theſe predictions and circumſtances do all center in Jeſus

Chriſt, I plainly diſcern that *Judaiſm* is ſo far from demanding my ſubmiſſion to it, that it directs me to JESUS CHRIST, and is accompliſhed and perfected in him.

Upon all theſe accounts, I declare myſelf to be a chriſtian; and am conſcious that I have not taken up the profeſſion of Chriſtianity by chance, or in compliance with the cuſtom of my country, or merely thro' the force of education: But as my faith is the reſult of a ſerious examination and impartial enquiry, and as I am perſuaded that its pretences to revelation and a divine original are ſupported with all the ſtrength of argument and proof, that the nature of the thing will bear, or a reaſonable mind can deſire, I think it both my duty and intereſt to ſubmit to it as an inſtitution from God. And till I can ſee the evidence of it diſproved, or the religion of CHRIST itſelf demonſtrated to be irrational and abſurd, I am determined by the grace of God to hold faſt my profeſſion to the end, ſeeking after the kingdom of everlaſting glory by the practice of that righteouſneſs which prepares for and leads to it; in a firm dependence upon the truth of that comfortable declaration of JESUS CHRIST, *That God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.*

A

CATECHISM:

OR, AN

INSTRUCTION

In the CHRISTIAN

RELIGION,

By way of

QUESTION and ANSWER.

In THREE PARTS.

I. Of religion in general, and of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion in particular.
II. Of the Articles of the Christian Faith.
III. Of the Laws and Institutions of the Christian Religion.

By the Reverend JOHN MEARS, M. A.

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AN
INSTRUCTION
IN THE
Chriſtian Religion, &c.

PART I.

Of Religion in general, and of the Grounds and Reaſons of the Chriſtian Religion in particular.

Queſt. 1. *WHAT do you underſtand by religion?*

Anſw. By religion, I underſtand the performance of all thoſe duties we owe to God, to other men, and to ourſelves, ariſing from a principle of love to God, and to mankind; or thus: pure religion, and undefiled before God, even the Father, is this; to

viſit the fatherleſs and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourſelves unſpotted from the world; to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and our neighbours as ourſelves; and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent world, *James* i. 27. *Mat.* xxii. 34. —40. *Tit.* ii. 12.

Queſt. 2. *What is the firſt principle of all religion?*

Anſw. The firſt and leading principle of all religion is, To believe that there is a God, the Maker of all things, and the ſupreme Governor of the world, *Heb.* xi. 6.

Queſt. 3. *How does it appear that there is a God?*

Anſw. By the things that are made, it evidently appears that there is an eternal Power and Godhead, a firſt Cauſe, who is moſt powerful, wiſe and good, *Rom.* i. 20.

Queſt. 4. *How do you prove that this eternal Being, this firſt cauſe, is moſt powerful, wiſe, and good?*

Anſw. That the eternal Being, and firſt Cauſe of all things, is poſſeſſed of infinite power, wiſdom and goodneſs, appears from the effects he has produced; for, ſince we ourſelves, and all other beings, have derived our exiſtence, and all the powers we have, from him, it is plain, he muſt be poſſeſſed of Almighty

mighty power; ſince we are endued with reaſon and underſtanding, with knowledge and wiſdom, he, who made us, muſt, of neceſſity, be an intelligent Being; and ſince he has implanted in us ſuch degrees of perfection, ſuch good and virtuous affections, and ſuch capacities of happineſs, as we find ourſelves poſſeſſed of, we muſt conclude, that he is a Being of moſt perfect goodneſs, *Pſal.* xciv. 10, 11.

Queſt. 5. *Can you give any farther illuſtration of this argument?*

Anſw. When we look up unto the heavens, and conſider the ſun, the moon, and the ſtars; when we look downwards to the earth, and conſider all the conveniencies it affords us; when we reflect on the ſtructure and frame of our own bodies, and when we conſider the variety, the order, and harmony that is to be obſerved in all theſe, we cannot but diſcern many plain inſtances of deſign and contrivance, of Almighty power and overflowing goodneſs, *Pſ.* viii. and xix. 1. 6. and xxxiii. 5. and civ. 24. and cxxxix. 14, 15, 16. *Acts* xiv. 17. and xvii. 25. 28.

Queſt. 6. *Hath God made any revelation of his will to mankind?*

Anſw. Beſides the light of nature, which he hath afforded unto all men, he hath at ſundry times, and in divers manners, ſpoken, in times

paſt, unto the fathers by the prophets, and, in theſe laſt days, he hath ſpoken unto us by his Son, *Rom.* ii. 14. *Heb.* i. 1, 2.

Queſt. 7. *What do you underſtand by the light of nature?*

Anſw. By the light of nature, I underſtand that ſenſe of moral good and evil, which God hath implanted in our minds; and that reaſon and underſtanding he hath given us, by which he made himſelf known to us, and ſhewed us what is good, and what he hath required of us.

Queſt. 8. *What need was there of any other revelation beſides the light of nature?*

Anſw. The neceſſity of another revelation, beſides the light of nature, ariſes from this: that mankind, in every age had greatly corrupted their ways; they ſoon ſunk into idolatry and groſs ignorance concerning God and religion, and, in proceſs of time, had abuſed the natural light that God had given them, ſo far as almoſt to extinguiſh it, which rendered a divine revelation highly needful and expedient; and therefore God, in his great compaſſion to mankind, was graciouſly pleaſed to ſend them prophets from time to time, to inſtruct them in religion, and reform their lives; and at length, ſent his own Son into the world, to publiſh by himſelf and his apoſtles, the laſt and moſt perfect revelation of his will, that he intended to make;

and

and which might be of ſtanding and general uſe to all nations, and all ages of the world, *Gen.* vi. 5. *Acts* xvii. 22.—31. *Rom.* i. 21, 22. *Eph.* iv. 17, 18, 19.

Queſt. 9. *How doth it appear that the prophets of old, and, in theſe laſt days, Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles, were ſent by God, to reveal his will to the world?*

Anſw. It appears that they were ſent of God by the doctrines they taught, the miracles they worked, and the Spirit of prophecy that was in them.

Queſt. 10. *What was the nature of the doctrines they taught?*

Anſw. The doctrines they taught, were ſuch as were every way worthy of God, being fitted to promote the cauſe of virtue and true religion, and thereby the happineſs of mankind, and for this we need only to appeal to the doctrines themſelves, as they are contained in the books of the Old and New Teſtaments. *Pſal.* xix. 7.—11. *Luke* iv. 22. *John* vii. 46. *Phil.* iii. 8.

Queſt. 11. *How does this prove, that a perſon, who teaches ſuch doctrines is ſent of God?*

Anſw. This alone does not prove a perſon to be ſent of God, but is only a neceſſary qualification in one who pretends to be ſo; and without which, all the miracles in the world are not a ſufficient evidence to prove a divine miſſion.

Queſt.

Queſt. 12. *You ſaid that the ancient prophets, and Jeſus Chriſt with his apoſtles, proved that they were ſent of God by the miracles they wrought, tell me, What do you underſtand by a miracle?*

Anſw. By a miracle, I underſtand an unuſual and extraordinary work done by a man, or at his deſire, or in his favour, which yet exceeds all the art or power of men to do of themſelves.

Queſt. 13. *What were the miracles which* Moſes, *and the prophets, Chriſt and his apoſtles, did work, to prove their divine miſſion?*

Anſw. They performed a great number of miracles of various kinds, ſuch as were the ſigns and wonders that *Moſes* did in the preſence of *Pharaoh*, and the *Egyptians;* his opening a paſſage through the Red-ſea for the *Iſraelites; Joſhua* doing the like in the river *Jordan;* the walls of *Jericho* falling down, without any force laid againſt them, after they had been encompaſſed about ſeven days; with ſeveral other interpoſitions of divine providence in favour of that people, that are recorded in the hiſtory of the Old Teſtament. But the miracles that were done by Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles exceeded all that had ever been done before them; for our Lord cauſed the blind to receive their ſight, the lame to walk, the lepers to be cleanſed,

the

the deaf to hear, the dumb to ſpeak, the dead to be raiſed; at one time he fed four thouſand men, beſides women and children, with ſeven loaves and a few little fiſhes, and they did all eat, and were filled, and they took up of the broken meat that was left ſeven baſkets full; at another time, he fed five thouſand men, beſides women and children, with five loaves and two fiſhes, and they alſo did all eat and were filled, and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baſkets full: he commanded the winds and the ſeas, and they obeyed him; he walked upon the water, and enabled *Peter*, one of his diſciples, to do the like; and, after he had been crucified by his enemies, he roſe again from the dead on the third day, and at the end of forty days, he aſcended up into heaven, in a glorious triumphant manner, in the preſence of his diſciples; and, ſoon after that, he poured forth on his diſciples, according to his promiſe, the gift of the holy Ghoſt, ſo that they ſpake diſtinctly in all kinds of languages, without any previous inſtruction, they performed all the ſame ſorts of miracles that Chriſt had done, beſide divers other gifts of the Spirit, with which they were endued; and many of thoſe miracles were worked by the bare ſpeaking of a word, and ſome of them at a diſtance. *Exod.* in ſeveral

places

places. *Pſal.* cv. 26.—36. and cvi. 9, 10, 11. *Joſh.* iii. 14 17. and vi 20. *Mat.* xi. 5. and xiv. 15—21. and xv. 32—38. and viii. 23—27. and xiv. 22—33. and xxvii and xxviii *Chapters. Acts* ii. 1——12. *John* xiv. 12. 1 *Cor.* xii. 4—11.

Queſt. 14. *But how do miracles prove that the perſon who works them is ſent of God, ſince we find that the magicians of* Egypt *worked miracles, at leaſt what appeared ſuch to the ſpectators, which is in effect, the ſame thing; and* Simon Magus *did ſuch ſurpriſing works, as made the people of* Samaria *believe that he was the great power of God?* Exod. vii. 11, 12. Acts viii. 9, 10, 11.

Anſw. Miracles alone, and without any other conſideration, are not a ſufficient evidence of a divine miſſion, but the nature and tendency of the doctrines which the man who performs the miracles teaches, muſt alſo be taken into the argument; and then, if, upon enquiry, it appears he teaches ſuch doctrines as are uſeful to promote the happineſs of mankind, and worthy of a wiſe and good God to declare and publiſh to the world, it is reaſonable to believe that his miracles are done by the aſſiſtance either of God himſelf, or ſome good angel at his command, which is the ſame thing in effect; and conſequently, that he has a divine commiſſion

miſſion, and ſpeaks and acts in the name of God: but if his doctrines appear to be unworthy of the wiſdom and goodneſs of God; if they be abſurd, inconſiſtent, or trifling; eſpecially, if they be of a pernicious tendency to the cauſe of virtue, we may conclude, that he is but a deceiver and impoſtor, and runs without being ſent. But if he pretends to no divine miſſion himſelf, nor teaches any doctrines at all, but only works miracles, in oppoſition to thoſe who do, we are ſtill to have recourſe to the doctrines that are taught by him who pretends to be a divine meſſenger, which, if they appear to be worthy of God, are a ſufficient vindication of his pretenſions, notwithſtanding the miracles worked in oppoſition to him; for in this caſe, ſuch miracles being done to oppoſe a wiſe and good deſign, it is reaſonable to believe they are performed by the aſſiſtance of evil ſpirits; and, that the other being done with deſign to advance the happineſs of men, and the glory of God, are performed by a divine aſſiſtance; though in ſuch caſes, whenever they happen, the Almighty God, ſuch is his goodneſs, has always taken care, that the true prophet ſhould be able, by the ſuperior multitude, or greatneſs of his miracles, above thoſe of the other, to vindicate his divine miſſion, as was actually done in the caſes referred to in the queſtion

ſtion. And by theſe marks may we always diſtinguiſh between the miracles of God's meſſengers, and thoſe that are at any time done by falſe prophets. *Deut.* xiii. 1, 2, 3. *John* vii. 16. and xiv. 10.

Queſt. 15. *You ſeem by this method of arguing, to prove the truth of the prophet's doctrines by his miracles; and the truth of his miracles by his doctrines; which every one muſt allow to be a falſe and deceitful way of reaſoning; How do you anſwer this exception againſt your argument?*

Anſw. I do not prove the truth of a prophet's doctrines by his miracles, and the truth of his miracles by his doctrines; but I only conſider the excellency of his doctrines as a neceſſary circumſtance or condition, without which all the miracles in the world could not prove a divine miſſion, and with which his miracles are a proof, not properly of the truth of his doctrines, but rather of his divine miſſion, which being once proved, the truth of his doctrines muſt follow in courſe.

Queſt. 16. *You ſaid, That the antient prophets, and Jeſus Chriſt, and his apoſtles, did likewiſe prove their divine miſſion by the Spirit of prophecy; tell me, What do you underſtand by a Spirit of prophecy?*

Anſw. By a Spirit of prophecy I underſtand a power

a power of foretelling, certainly and infallibly, ſuch future events as men of themſelves cannot foreſee.

Queſt. 17. *How does a Spirit of prophecy prove a divine miſſion?*

Anſw. A Spirit of prophecy proves a divine miſſion in the ſame manner as miracles do; that is not by itſelf alone, nor even if miracles were joined with it, but by taking into conſideration the doctrines that are taught by him who pretends to ſuch a gift; and if it appear that a perſon pretending a divine miſſion, teaches ſuch doctrines as are worthy of God, and foretells ſuch things as no man could of himſelf foreſee, and the events anſwer the prediction, then it is reaſonable to believe, that his prophetic gift is from God, and conſequently, that he is ſent by him.

Queſt. 18. *Did* Moſes *and the prophets, Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles, foretel ſuch future events as men of themſelves could not foreſee?*

Anſw. Yes they foretold a great many future events of importance to the world, and ſuch as no man could have foretold without a Spirit of prophecy; the moſt of which accordingly came to paſs, and ſome are yet to be fulfilled, *Rev.* xix. 10.

Queſt. 19. *Can you rehearſe ſome of thoſe things they foretold?*

Anſw.

Anſw. Moſes and the ancient prophets foretold many things relating to the various turns of proſperity and adverſity, the captivities, diſperſions, and reſtorations, that the *Jewiſh* nation ſhould meet with: they foretold the coming of the *Meſſiah*, and all the circumſtances of his appearance in the world; they give us lively deſcriptions of his perſon and offices, his ſufferings and the glory that ſhould follow, and the ſucceſs and propagation of his goſpel. *Jeſus Chriſt* foretold his own death; the manner and circumſtances of it; his reſurrection from the dead on the third day; his aſcenſion into heaven; the miraculous gifts of the Spirit beſtowed on the apoſtles; the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, with all the particular circumſtances of it; the diſperſion of the *Jews* through all nations; the ſucceſs and propagation of his goſpel, and the efficacy it ſhould have for the converſion and reformation of the world. The apoſtles foretold, that errors, ſects, and ſchiſms, ſhould ariſe in the Chriſtian church; and particularly that a grand apoſtacy from the purity of the Chriſtian faith, worſhip, and obedience, ſhould happen in the latter times; that a certain ſpiritual tyranny ſhould be erected over the minds and conſciences of men, which ſhould prevail for a long time, but at length be broken and deſtroyed: this is the principal ſubject of

of the revelation of *John*. They foretel the converſion of the *Jews* to the faith of Chriſt, and with that the coming in of the fulneſs of the *Gentiles*; when the whole world ſhall be enlightened with the knowledge of the true God, and of his Son Jeſus Chriſt. Now all theſe are things of a very contingent nature, and ſuch as no man could certainly foreſee of himſelf; all of them that relate to the times already paſt, have been exactly fulfilled, as appears both from the ſacred and civil hiſtory, and thoſe that are yet to be accompliſhed, as we have reaſon to believe they ſhall be fulfilled in their ſeaſon; ſo, when they are, they will be a farther confirmation of the truth of the goſpel. *Gen.* xlix. 10. *Deut.* xviii. 15.——19. and xxviii throughout. *Pſal.* ii. xvi. xxii. lxxxix. cx. *Iſa.* vii. 14, and ix. 6, 7, and xi and xii entire. And xl. 3. and xlii. 1——4. xliv. 28. and xlv. in ſeveral places; and lii, liii, liv *Chapters*, and lv. and lxi. 1, 2, 3. *Jerem.* *Daniel*, and the *Goſpels*, *Acts*, *Epiſtles*, *Revelations*.

Queſt. 20. *What is the ſum of what has been ſaid concerning the proofs of divine revelation?*

Anſw. The ſum of what has been ſaid is this: *Moſes* and the prophets appeared in the world as the meſſengers of God, to the *Jews* of old, to reveal his will to them, and inſtruct them

them in the knowledge of the true God and his laws; *Jeſus Chriſt* came into the world as the Son of God, to publiſh the laſt and moſt perfect diſpenſation of religion that God intended to make; and the apoſtles were ſent by him to be his witneſſes to the ends of the earth, and to preach repentance for the remiſſion of ſins in his name, among all nations, and teaching them to obſerve all things that he had commanded; all theſe did teach moſt excellent doctrines, ſuch as were worthy of God, and uſeful to promote the happineſs of mankind; and to confirm their divine miſſion according to their ſeveral characters, they did ſuch works as far exceeded all human art and power, and foretold many future events, which none could foreſee but God, and which accordingly came to paſs; and therefore there is all the reaſon in the world to receive them as true prophets, and their doctrines as divine revelations.

Queſt. 21. *But how does it appear to us that the ancient prophets, and Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles, did really teach ſuch doctrines as are aſcribed to them, and perform the miraculous works, and foretel the future events that are reported of them?*

Anſw. Theſe things are all recorded in writing in the books of the Old and New Teſtament.

Queſt. 22. *But how does it appear to us that theſe*

theſe books contain a true and authentic hiſtory?

Anſw. Becauſe they were written by men who had all the qualifications of true and credible hiſtorians in the moſt eminent degree.

Queſt. 23. *What are thoſe qualifications that render an hiſtorian worthy of credit?*

Anſw. The principal qualifications of a true hiſtorian, are, ability to know and judge of the truth of what he reports, and integrity to write nothing as true, but what he ſincerely believes to be ſo; wherever thoſe qualifications are found they render an hiſtorian highly worthy of credit.

Queſt. 24. *How does it appear that the ſacred hiſtorians had ſufficient ability to know and judge of the truth of what they have reported?*

Anſw. Becauſe they teſtify what they themſelves were eye and ear-witneſſes of; what their eyes ſaw, their ears heard, and their hands handled; what required no great penetration to judge of, and therefore they were in no danger of being deceived, or impoſed on themſelves. *John* xx. 1 *John* i. 2. 2 *Pet.* i. 16.

Queſt. 25. *How does their integrity appear?*

Anſw. Their integrity and faithfulneſs, in relating nothing but what they ſincerely believed to be true, appears from hence, that there was no appearance of a falſe and deceitful diſpoſition in them; nothing like fraud, or deſign to impoſe upon the world is to be ſeen in their hiſtory

hiſtory; nor could they have propoſed any advantage to themſelves by giving a falſe teſtimony; they ſuffered many grievous hardſhips, and expoſed themſelves to many dangers in publiſhing their teſtimony to the world; and they were ready to lay down their lives in confirmation of it; and many of them were actually put to death on that ſcore, and ſuffered with invincible courage and reſolution, and with the greateſt meekneſs, patience, and forgiveneſs; and they knew before-hand that they were to meet with this kind of treatment from the world, for declaring their teſtimony, and publiſhing the will of God, and yet engaged in it, a plain evidence that they did not follow cunningly deviſed fables; that they were no cheats and impoſtors, but the true prophets, and ſervants, and apoſtles of the living God, who declared unto men the way of ſalvation.

Queſt. 26. *Can you produce any farther evidence of the truth of the facts recorded in the ſacred hiſtory?*

Anſw. There is this farther to be ſaid of the truth of the facts, that there is nothing incredible in them; nothing but what is very probable, and likely enough to be true; and the circumſtances of them are ſuch, as make it morally impoſſible that they could have been impoſed on the world as real facts, if they had not, indeed, been ſo.

Queſt.

Queſt. 27. *What are thoſe circumſtances?*

Anſw. The miracles and other facts related in this hiſtory, are reported to have been ſo many, and various, done in ſuch a public manner, before ſo many ſpectators, and upon ſo many different occaſions, that if they had not really been done, the hiſtory of them could never have been received in the world. *Deut.* vii. 18, 19. and xi. 2.—7. *Acts* ii. 22. and xxvi. 26.

Queſt. 28. *Can you explain what you ſay by an inſtance?*

Anſw. Moſes (for inſtance) could never have made the children of *Iſrael* believe that he led them through the Red-Sea, as on dry land; that God ſpake to them from mount *Sinai*, and gave them a law in a moſt aſtoniſhing manner; and that he led them in the wilderneſs for the ſpace of forty years, ſupporting them by daily miracles, if theſe things had not been really done; nor could *Joſhua* have made them believe that they were brought through the river *Jordan* as on dry land; and that the walls of *Jericho* fell down, withont any force laid againſt them, after they had been encompaſſed about ſeven days, if no ſuch things had been done; for it is impoſſible to make men believe that they ſee, or hear, what they know very well they neither ſee nor hear, and what, in reality

reality, was never either ſpoken or done. *Joſh.* xxiv. 1.——13.

Queſt. 29. *How do you apply this way of reaſoning to Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles?*

Anſw. This way of reaſoning may be applied to *Chriſt* and his apoſtles, thus: it is impoſſible that *Jeſus Chriſt* and his apoſtles, could have made men believe that they cured them of their ſeveral diſtempers, and bodily infirmities, by the ſpeaking of a word, and ſometimes, at a diſtance, if no ſuch things had really been done, but they had ſtill been under the power of their diſtempers; it is impoſſible that they could have perſuaded others that they were raiſed from the dead, and actually reſtored to life, if they had been ſtill in their graves; nor was it poſſible to have perſuaded the multitudes, who were ſpectators of all theſe things, that they ſaw them, and many other wonderful works done by *Chriſt* and his apoſtles, if yet no ſuch things had been done at all; for mankind was never, in any age, ſo fooliſhly credulous, as to believe ſuch ſtrange and ſurprizing things without the leaſt foundation. *Mat.* i. 4, 5. 2 *Cor.* xii. 12.

Queſt. 30. *What you have ſaid proves the truth of the facts recorded in the ſcripture-hiſtory, ſo far as relates to miracles; but Jeſus Chriſt, the author of the Chriſtian religion, and the*

the great ſubject of the New Teſtament-hiſtory, delivered ſeveral long diſcourſes and parables in the hearing of his diſciples, which they likewiſe relate in this hiſtory; and in theſe diſcourſes and parables there are ſeveral things, which, they themſelves confeſs, they did not truly underſtand at the time they heard them; and beſides, they were unlearned men, and were ſometimes charged by Chriſt himſelf with being dull, and ſlow of underſtanding; and they have alſo written ſeveral epiſtles, in which they attempt to explain, confirm, and vindicate the Chriſtian doctrines: now how do we know, and what reaſon have we to believe, that thoſe men have given us a true and faithful narrative of theſe diſcourſes and parables, and a juſt account of the Chriſtian doctrines and laws in their hiſtories and epiſtles?

Anſw. Jeſus Chriſt promiſed to them before he left them, that, after his aſcenſion, the holy Ghoſt, the Spirit of God ſhould deſcend upon them, to lead them into all truth, to bring all things to their remembrance that they had heard from him, and to furniſh them with all other gifts, neceſſary to qualify them to be his witneſſes to the ends of the earth, and the publiſhers of his religion to the world. Now this accordingly came to paſs at the feaſt of *Pentecoſt* that firſt happened after his reſurrection;

when they were all filled with the holy Ghoſt, and ſpake with other tongues, than what they had been acquainted with before, as the Spirit gave them utterance; and had alſo many other extraordinary and miraculous gifts beſtowed on them, with a power of communicating ſome of theſe gifts to other members of the churches, on whom they ſhould lay their hands for that end, which they accordingly did, whereſoever they planted a church. Now, by theſe extraordinary and miraculous gifts of the Spirit, were they fitted truly and faithfully to report what they had heard and learned from Chriſt, and to give the world, both in their preaching and writing, a juſt and full account of the Chriſtian religion. *John* xiv. 12, 25, 26. and xv. 26, 27. and xvi. 7—13. *Acts* ii. 1—12. and 5. 32. 1 *Cor.* xii. 4—11.

Queſt. 31. *What you have hitherto ſaid proves abundantly that the hiſtory of thoſe facts could not have been forged at the time they are ſaid to have been done in: but how do we know but all theſe things might have been invented by cunning and deſigning men, and put together in an hiſtory, ſuch as we now have it, ſome diſtance of time after the facts are ſuppoſed to have been done?*

Anſw. This could not have been done because the circumſtances of time and place are

ſet down in the hiſtory, and the ſucceſs with which the goſpel was attended, immediately after its general publication, whereby it is manifeſt that the principal facts, recorded in this hiſtory, muſt have happened in the land of *Judea*, the city of *Jeruſalem*, at the feaſts of the Paſſover and Pentecoſt, when *Tiberius Caeſar*, was Emperor of *Rome*, and when *Pontius Pilate* was governor of *Judea*; before which time there were no Chriſtians in the world, but have been ever ſince; which things are alſo atteſted by the concurrent teſtimony of other hiſtorians, who write of thoſe times, particularly *Suetonius* *, *Tacitus* †, and *Joſephus* ‡, who take notice in their ſeveral hiſtories, of a certain perſon called *Chriſt*, who had been put to death in *Judea*, in the reign of *Tiberius Caeſar*; and of a ſect of people called *Chriſtians* from him, who had been ſpreading through ſeveral parts of the *Roman* Empire from that time.

This is farther confirmed from this conſideration, that the books wherein this hiſtory is contained, were written moſt of them, by ſome of the apoſtles themſelves, and the reſt by men who were their conſtant companions and fellow-

* In his life of *Claudius*, Chap. 25.
† Book XV. Of his annals.
‡ Antiquities, Book XVIII.

labourers, and who alſo were endued with th
extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; they wer
ſeveral of them preſerved, for a conſiderabl
time, in the very firſt draught of them, as the
had been compiled by the Authors themſelves
and were appealed to as extant, by *Tertullian*
who wrote in the latter end of the *Second Cen*
tury; they were early tranſlated into variou
languages, and copies of them, both in thei
original language and tranſlations, were diſperſe
every where, throughout all the churches
and even the enemies of Chriſtianity had then
in their hands: they were quoted in ſermon
and other writings, particularly in the apologie
that Chriſtians made for the truth of the goſpel
and even in the books that were written againſ
it by its enemies: all theſe things make it a
bundantly manifeſt that theſe books were ex
tant, and publicly known very ſoon after ſom
of the facts recorded in them, had been don
and while they were ſtill freſh in the memorie
of men, and in the very time when others
them were a doing, and therefore could n
be a forgery ſome diſtance of time after th
facts are ſuppoſed to have been done.

To which may be added, that ſuch a fo
gery could not, in this caſe, have been impo
ed on the world, becauſe publie monumen
were ſet up, and outward actions were pe
forme

formed in memory of ſome of the moſt remark-
able of theſe facts, which monuments, actions,
and obſervances, were inſtituted, and did com-
mence from the very time when the facts are
ſaid to have been done, and have been obſerved
in the Chriſtian world ever ſince. The monu-
ments and actions I mean are baptiſm, as a rite
of being enter'd into the Chriſtian church; the
Lord's-ſupper in memory of his death; the aſ-
ſembling of Chriſtians for public worſhip on the
firſt day of the week, in memory of his reſur-
rection; and the order of Paſtors and Teach-
ers to preſide in theſe aſſemblies. Now let us
ſuppoſe that the whole hiſtory of the goſpel had
been a mere fiction, invented ſome time after
the facts recorded in it are ſaid to have been
done, then ſurely, at the time when it was firſt
invented, there muſt have been no Chriſtians
in the world, no ſuch monuments as the Lord's-
ſupper, and the Lord's-day, no ſuch inſtituti-
ons as baptiſm, and the order of teachers; and
yet the hiſtory ſuppoſes theſe to have been in-
ſtituted, and the obſervance of them to have
commenced from the very time when the facts
are ſaid to have happened. Now this muſt diſ-
cover the fraud, and give the lye to the whole
hiſtory; the truth whereof is laid upon ſuch pu-
blic outward actions, having been obſerved
from the time in which the facts are ſaid to have

been done, and therefore muſt render it morally impoſſible that ſuch an invention ſhould have been received in the world; and the ſame remark will ſerve for the *Moſaical* diſpenſation which had far more obſervances of this kind than the Chriſtian *.

Queſt. 32. *For what end were all theſe things committed to writing?*

Anſ. Theſe things were written, that knowing the certainty of them, we might believe that *Jeſus* is the *Chriſt*, the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through his name. And the books wherein they are contained give us ſuch an account of God's revelations to mankind, as is abundantly full and plain, and every way ſufficient to anſwer all the purpoſes of a divine revelation. *Luke* i. 4. *John* xx. 31. *John* xv. 15. *Acts* xx. 27. 2 *Cor.* iii. 12. and iv. 2, 3, 4. 2 *Tim.* iii. 15, 16.

Queſt. 33. *What is the danger of rejecting or diſobeying the goſpel-revelation?*

Anſw. He that believeth not on the Son of God ſhall not ſee life, but the wrath of God abideth on him; for how ſhall we eſcape if we neglect ſo great a ſalvation, which, at the firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was after-

* See this argument more fully treated in *Leſly's* ſhort method with the *Deiſts*.

ward

wards confirmed unto the world by them that heard him? God alſo bearing them witneſs, with ſigns and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the holy Ghoſt, according to his own will. *John* iii. 36. *Heb.* ii. 3, 4.

Queſt. 34. *For what end were all theſe revelations made to mankind?*

Anſw. All theſe revelations were made to the world chiefly for this end, to teach men how they might obtain the favour of God, and and in what manner they ſhould live in this world, ſo as they might be uſeful and ſerviceable in it, and be qualified for the enjoyment of eternal life and happineſs in the world to come, 2 *Tim.* iii. 15, 16. 1 *Theſſ.* iv. 1.

PART II.

Of the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith.

Queſt. 1. *WHAT are the principal articles of the Chriſtian faith?*

Anſw. The principal articles of the Chriſtian faith, are briefly ſumm'd up in what is commonly called the apoſtles creed, namely, *I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth: And in Jeſus Chriſt his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the*

 An Inſtruction in the Chriſtian Religion,
Holy Ghoſt, born of the Virgin Mary, *ſuffered under* Pontius Pilate, *was crucified, dead and buried; he deſcended into hell,* [that is, he went into the inviſible world] *the third day he roſe again from the dead, He aſcended into Heaven, and ſitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence he ſhall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghoſt; I believe there is a holy catholic church, and a communion of ſaints; I believe the forgiveneſs of ſins; the reſurrection of the body, and the life everlaſting,* Amen.

Queſt. 2. *Into how many parts may this creed be divided?*

Anſw. It may be divided into ſix parts; the firſt whereof treats concerning God, and his works of creation and providence. The ſecond concerning *Jeſus Chriſt*, and our redemption by him. The third concerning the Holy Ghoſt. The fourth concerning the church of Chriſt, and the communion of ſaints. The fifth concerning the pardon of ſin. And, the ſixth, concerning the reſurrection and a future ſtate.

Queſt. 3. *You ſay the firſt part of this creed treats of God, and his works of creation and providence, tell me, What do the ſcriptures teach concerning God?*

Anſw. Concerning God, who is the firſt cauſe of all things, the ſelf-exiſtent, independent,

dent, and infinitely perfect Being, and in many reſpects incomprehenſible by us, the ſcriptures do expreſly teach us, that he is eternal and unchangeable, that he is a Spirit, that is, *A living and intelligent Being;* that though he be inviſible by mortal eyes; yet he is every where preſent, and knows all things; that he is moſt powerful, wiſe and good; moſt juſt and holy, and faithful; merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and ſlow to wrath; and that there is but one God, and none other but he. *Exod.* iii. 14. *Rom.* xi. 33.—36. *Pſal.* xc. 2. *Jam.* i. 17. *John* iv. 24. *Acts* xvii. 29. 1 *Tim.* i. 17. and vi. 16. *Pſ.* cxxxix. 1. —12. *Jer.* xxiii. 23, 24. 1 *Sam.* ii. 3. 1 *John* iii. 20. *Matth.* xix. 26. *Pſalm* civ. 24. and cxlv. 8, 9, 17. *Rev.* iv. 8. and xv. 3, 4. *Exod.* xxxiv. 6, 7. and xx. 3. *Deut.* vi. 4. *Mark* xii. 19. 1 *Cor.* viii. 6.

Queſt. 4. *What do the ſcriptures teach us concerning the works of creation and providence?*

Anſw. The ſcriptures teach us, That God is the Creator, Preſerver, and Governor of all things; that he made the world, the heavens and the earth, and all things that are in them, viſible and inviſible; that he preſerves them all, and governs the whole univerſe with the moſt perfect wiſdom and goodneſs, *Gen.* i. 1. and i. 1. *Nehem.* ix. 6. *Pſalm* xxxvi. 6. and civ. 24. *Dan.* iv. 34, 35. *Acts* iv. 24. and

xiv 17. and xvii. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28.

Queſt. 5. *What do the ſcriptures teach concerning the creation of mankind?*

Anſw. The ſcriptures teach us, That God created man in his own image; that he created them male and female, one of each ſex; and, *That he hath made of that one blood, all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth.* Gen i. 27. Acts xvii. 26.

Queſt. 6. *What do you underſtand by the image of God, in which man was created?*

Anſw. By the image of God, in which man was created, I underſtand every thing wherein man bears a reſemblance to the deity; particularly that reaſon and underſtanding, that wiſdom and knowledge, thoſe virtuous and good diſpoſitions, thoſe kind and benevolent affections, which God hath implanted in the human nature, (which is the work of the law, written in our hearts) and the immortality of the ſoul; together with that power and dominion over the inferior creatures, which he has communicated to mankind. *Eph.* iv. 24. *Col.* iii. 10. *Eccl.* vii. 29. *Gen.* i. 26.

Queſt. 7. *Did mankind ſtill continue in the ſtate of innocence and integrity in which God firſt created them?*

Anſw. No. Though God made man up-
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right, yet they ſought out many inventions, they greatly corrupted their ways, and all have ſinned, and come ſhort of the glory of God. *Eccleſ.* vii. 29. *Rom.* iii. 24.

Queſt. 8. *You ſaid that the ſecond part of the creed treats of Jeſus Chriſt, and our redemption by him; tell me, What do the Scriptures teach concerning him?*

Anſw. Concerning Jeſus Chriſt the Scriptures teach us, That he is the Son of the living God; the only begotten of the Father, the brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon; who had glory with him before the world was, and was in the form of God: that he is the word or wiſdom of God, who was in the beginning with God, and was God, by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made that was made. That for us men, and for our ſalvation, he came down from heaven, was made fleſh, and dwelt among us, laying aſide the form of God, and taking upon him the form of a ſervant, and the faſhion of a man. That he was *Immanuel*, God with us, God manifeſted in the fleſh, that it pleaſed the Father that in him ſhould all fulneſs dwell, even all the fulneſs of the Godhead bodily; and, that he is over all, God, bleſſed for ever, *Mat.* xvi. 16. *John* i. 18. *Heb.* i. 2. *John* xvii. 5. *Philip.* ii. 6. *John* i. 1, 2, 3. and iii. 13. and

i. 14. *Phil.* ii. 7, 8. *Iſa.* vii. 14. *Matth.* i. 23. 1 *Tim.* iii. 16. *Coloſſ.* i. 19. and ii. 9. *Rom.* ix. 5.

Queſt. 9. *How did Jeſus Chriſt bring about the redemption of mankind?*

Anſw. Jeſus Chriſt, the Son of God, having condeſcended to come into the world, in order to redeem mankind from ſin and miſery, was miraculouſly born of a virgin, by the influence of the Holy Ghoſt, became a man, took part of fleſh and blood, and was ſubject to all the innocent infirmities of the human nature, having been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without ſin; and did in our nature become Mediator between God and man, and as ſuch undertook the three-fold office of prophet, prieſt, and king; in the execution of which he fully accompliſhed our redemption from ſin, and the fatal conſequences of it. *Heb.* x. 7. *Phil.* ii. 6, 7. *Matth.* i. 18. 20. 23. *Luke* i. 35. *Heb.* ii. 14. 17, 18. and iv. 15. 1 *Tim.* ii. 5. *Acts* iii. 22. *Heb.* v. 5. 10. and vi. 20. *Luke* i. 32, 33. *Acts* v. 31. *Mat.* xxviii. 18. *John* xviii. 36. *Rev.* xix. 16.

Queſt. 10. *How did Jeſus Chriſt execute theſe three offices, of prophet, prieſt, and king?*

Anſw. Jeſus Chriſt, as a prophet, and prieſt, gave us a full and complete revelation of the whole will and counſel of God, relating to the redmpti-

redemption and ſalvation of mankind; and a moſt perfect example of holineſs and virtue in his own life; he laid down his life in confirmation of his doctrine and teſtimony, and as a ſacrifice for ſin; he became obedient to death, even the death of the croſs. He roſe again from the dead on the third day, aſcended into the heavens, there to preſent himſelf an offering unto God, of a ſweet ſmelling ſavour, and to appear in the preſence of God for us, as our advocate, and interceſſor, where he ever lives, making interceſſion for us. And as a king, he is exalted at the right hand of the Majeſty in the heavens, a Prince, and a Saviour, to give repentance and remiſſion of ſins: he has all power in heaven and in earth committed unto him, and is conſtituted the Head and King of the church, and ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and the dead. *John* xvii. 6. 8. 14. 26. and xv. 15. and xiii. 15. *Matth.* xxvi. 28. *Eph.* v. 2. *Phil.* ii. 8, 9. 1 *Cor.* xv. 3, 4. *Heb.* ix. 24. and vii. 25. *Acts* v. 31. and x. 42. *Col.* i. 18. 1 *Pet.* iii. 22.

Queſt. 11. *But how are we to underſtand that expreſſion in the creed,* He deſcended into hell?

Anſw. The *Hebrew* and *Greek* words which are commonly tranſlated *Hell,* are not uſed to ſignify the place of the damned, but either the grave,

or the inviſible ſtate of all departed ſouls, during their ſeparation from the body: the meaning of that expreſſion in the creed ſeems to be this; that as our Saviour's body was laid in the grave, ſo his ſoul went into the inviſible world, into the place of ſeparate ſouls; into paradiſe, that place in the ſeparate ſtate, where the ſouls of the righteous, being in the hands of God, do reſt from their labours, and enjoy the beginning of their reward.

Queſt. 12. *What was it that moved God to ſend his Son, and the Son of God ſo freely to come into the world, to accompliſh our redemption in this manner?*

Anſw. God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever ſhould believe on him, and obey his laws, might not periſh, but have everlaſting life; in this was manifeſted the love of God towards us, for that God ſent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him; herein is love, not that we loved him, but that he loved us, and ſent his Son to be the propitiation for our ſins; and Chriſt loved us ſo as to give himſelf for us a ſacrifice and offering to God, and to waſh us from our ſins in his own blood, and make us kings and prieſts to God and his Father, *John* iii. 16. 1 *John* iv. 9, 10. *Eph.* v. 2. *Rev.* i. 5, 6.

Queſt.

Queſt. 13. *Is not this love of God, and of his Son Jeſus Chriſt towards us, a moſt powerful motive to engage us to the practice of religion and virtue?*

Anſw. It is no doubt, a moſt powerful argument to engage us to love God, and his Son *Jeſus Chriſt*, and to walk in love to one another, and to all men, even as *Chriſt* hath loved us, and given himſelf for us; this love of *Chriſt* ſhould conſtrain us, no more to live to ourſelves, but to him who died for us, and roſe again. *Eph.* ii. 5. 2 *Cor.* v. 14, 15. 1 *John* iv. 11.

Queſt. 14. *You ſaid, That the third part of the creed related to the Holy Ghoſt, tell me, What do the Scriptures teach us concerning him?*

Anſw. Concerning the Holy Ghoſt, the Scriptures teach us, that he is the Spirit of God, and the power of the Higheſt, that he is the Spirit of the Father, and of the Son; who proceedeth from the Father, and is ſent by the Son; that he is preſent in the churches, and dwelleth in all good Chriſtians, as in temples, that he ſearcheth all things, even the deep things of God, and knoweth them, even as the ſpirit of a man knoweth the things of a man, *Mat.* iii. 16. *Luke* i. 35. *John* xiv. 16, 17. 26. and xv. 16. 26. and xvi. 17. 1 *Cor.* iii. 16. and

vi.

vi. 19. *Eph.* ii. 21, 22. and iv. 4. *Gal.* iv. 6. 1 *Cor.* ii. 10, 11, 12.

He is alſo repreſented as receiving all things from the Father and the Son, and having all things in common with them, in *John* xvi. 13, 14, 15; and he is joined with them in the form of baptiſm, in *Matth.* xxviii. 19. and in the ſolemn apoſtolical benediction, *The grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, &c. 2 *Cor.* xiii. 13.

Queſt. 15. *What are the offices of the Holy Spirit?*

Anſw. The offices of the Holy Spirit are repreſented in Scripture to be ſuch as theſe: that he inſpired the ancient prophets, who ſpake as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt; that by his miraculous influence a body was prepared for the Son in the womb of the virgin *Mary*; that he was the guide of *Chriſt* during his ſtate of humiliation, (for he was anointed with the Holy Ghoſt, and with power, and God gave not the Spirit unto him by meaſure,) that he deſcended on the apoſtles at the feaſt of Pentecoſt, in his miraculous gifts, by which they were qualified to be our Saviour's witneſſes, to the ends of the earth, and to publiſh his religion to the world, both by preaching and writing; that he is the Sanctifier of all good Chriſtians, aſſiſts them in well doing, fortifies them againſt temptation, and guides them in the paths

of

of piety and virtue; for which reaſon, partly, the title *Holy*, is peculiarly given to him, 1 *Pet.* i. 11. 2 *Pet.* i. 21. *Luke* i. 35. *Matth.* iii. 16. and xii. 28. *Luke* iv. 18. *Acts* x. 38. *John* iii. 34. *Acts* ii. 1, *&c.* and i. 8. 1 *Cor.* xii. throughout, and vi. 11. *John* iii. 5. *Rom.* viii. 14. *Eph.* iii. 16.

Queſt 16. *Have we any promiſe in Scripture of aſſiſtance from the Holy Spirit, for the purpoſes of repentance and new obedience?*

Anſw. The aſſiſtances of the Holy Spirit, for the purpoſes of faith, repentance, and new obedience, are promiſed to us in many places of Scripture; but particularly in theſe words of our Saviour, recorded by St *Luke* xi. 13. How much more ſhall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that aſk him. See to the ſame purpoſe. *Ezek.* xi. 19. and xxxvi. 25—27. 1 *Cor.* iii. 6, 7. 16, 17. and vi. 19. *Gal.* v. 22. 23. *Eph.* ii. 18. 22. and iv. 30. and v. 9. *Phil.* ii. 12, 13. 1 *Theſſ.* v. 23, 24. *James* i. 5. 17.

Queſt. 17. *How is it that the Spirit of God ſanctifies our hearts, and aſſiſts us in the practice of holineſs and virtue?*

Anſw. The Spirit of God ſanctifies our hearts, and aſſiſts us in the practice of holineſs and virtue, by enlightening our minds, and fixing our attention on the motives of religion, and thereby

by inclining us to the love and practice of it. But in what particular manner the Spirit of God works on our minds, we cannot tell; it is ſo ſecret, and ſo perfectly conſiſtent with our reaſonable natures, that we cannot diſtinguiſh it from the natural workings of our own minds; inſomuch, that we ſhould not have known that we had divine aſſiſtance in our good and virtuous actions, if we had not been informed of it in the word of God, *John* iii. 8. *Eph.* i. 16—19. and iii. 16—19. *Col* i. 9—11.

Queſt. 18. *Is not this promiſe of aſſiſtance from the Spirit of God, for the purpoſes of holineſs and virtue, a great motive and encouragement to it?*

Anſw. This promiſe of divine aſſiſtance is a very powerful motive, and a great encouragement to virtue and holineſs, to ſuch imperfect creatures as we are; for we are hereby aſſured, that our endeavours to ſubdue our evil habits, and conform ourſelves to the laws of the goſpel, ſhall not be in vain, but ſhall be crowned with ſucceſs, 1 *John* iv. 4.

Queſt. 19. *You ſaid the fourth part of the creed related to the church of Chriſt, and the communion of ſaints, tell me, Whom do you underſtand by the church of Chriſt?*

Anſw. By the church of Chriſt, ſo far as it is viſible to men, I underſtand the whole body of

of Chriſtians, diſperſed over the world profeſſing faith in Chriſt, and yielding obedience to his laws; though thoſe only, who are ſincere in this profeſſion and obedience, are real members of his church. This is what I underſtand by the Holy catholick church, *Matt.* xxviii. 20. *Luke* xxiv. 47. *Acts* i. 8. *Rom.* iii. 29, 30. 1. *Cor.* i. 2. *Rom.* xii. 5. 1 *Cor.* x. 7. *Eph.* iv. 4. 1 *Pet* ii. 9.

Queſt. 20. *But what is it you believe concerning this holy catholick church?*

Anſw. I do not believe that this catholick church (or any in it) is infallible, or has any power to add to or alter the conditions of ſalvation laid down in the goſpel; or that I am obliged to believe whatever the church believes: but when I profeſs to believe the holy catholick church, my meaning is this: that I believe that as Chriſt has hitherto had a church on earth, a company of men profeſſing his religion, and yielding obedience to his laws, ſo he will always have one ſomewhere or other, and that the gates of hell ſhall not finally prevail againſt it, *Gal.* i. 8. *Matt.* xvi. 18.

Queſt. 21. *What do you underſtand by the communion of ſaints?*

Anſw. By the communion of ſaints, I underſtand that union and fellowſhip which there

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ought to be among all thoſe who profeſs to be members of the holy Catholick Church.

Queſt. 22. *Wherein does the union and fellowſhip conſiſt?*

Anſw. It conſiſts chiefly in brotherly love, mutual forgiveneſs, and joint worſhip, (either ſtated or occaſional) ſo far as it may be done with a good conſcience.

Queſt. 23. *What do you mean when you profeſs to believe the communion of ſaints.*

Anſw. By this article I mean, that all who profeſs to be members of the body of Chriſt, ſhould love one another with pure hearts fervently; ſhould have compaſſion one of another; relieve the neceſſity of their indigent brethren; ſhould be of a forgiving ſpirit one towards another, and ſhould be ready, as far as they can with a good conſcience, to join in any part of chriſtian worſhip, with any of their chriſtian brethren, as they have opportunity, even with all, in every place, who make a credible profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and call on the Lord out of a pure heart, 1 *Pet.* i. 22. and iii. 8. *Rom.* xii. 13. *Col.* iii. 13. *Rom.* x. 13. compared with *Chap.* xiv. 17, 18. and xv. 5, 6, 7. 2 *Tim.* ii. 22. (See alſo the Scriptures under *Queſt.* 19.) *Acts* ii. 42. *Heb.* 10. 25.

Queſt. 24. *You ſaid the fifth part of the creed related to the pardon of ſin, tell me, what*

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do the ſcriptures teach concerning this?

Anſw. The Scriptures teach us, that if we confeſs our ſins, and heartily forſake them, and lead new lives for the future, we ſhall find mercy; for God is faithful, and juſt to forgive us our ſins, and cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs, and he will graciouſly accept of our repentance, and new obedience, through Jeſus Chriſt, *Prov.* xxviii. 13. *Iſai.* lv. 7. *Luke* v. 32. and xxiv. 47. 1 *Tim.* i. 15. 1 *John* i. 9.

Queſt. 25. *Is not this alſo a great encouragement and motive to repentance and new obedience.*

Anſw. To know that God will accept of repentance, and grant us pardon on that condition, is a very great encouragement to a ſinner to reform his life, and a moſt powerful motive to the practice of virtue, and to ſuch imperfect creatures as we are, who are encompaſſed about with infirmities, and daily liable to ſin, there cannot be a more encouraging motive to a future obedience, than to be aſſured that our repentance will not be in vain; that our ſins, how great and many ſoever they have been, ſhall not hinder our acceptance with God, provided we have heartily forſaken them, and ſincerely endeavour to amend.

Queſt.

Queſt. 26. *What does the laſt part of the creed treat of?*

Anſw. The laſt part of the creed treats of the reſurrection of the body, and a future ſtate.

Queſt. 27. *What are we taught in Scripture concerning the reſurrection of the body and a future judgment?*

Anſw. The Scriptures teach us, that there ſhall be a reſurrection of the dead, both of the juſt and unjuſt; and that we muſt all appear before the judgment ſeat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad, *Acts* xxiv. 15. 2 *Cor.* v. 10.

Queſt. 28. *What do the ſcriptures teach us concerning a future ſtate?*

Anſw. The Scriptures teach us, that Jeſus Chriſt having aboliſhed death, hath brought life, and immortality to light by the goſpel, and hath aſſured us, that there is a ſtate, after this, wherein men ſhall either be happy or miſerable, according as their prevailing temper and behaviour have been here, whether righteous, or wicked, 2 *Tim.* i. 10. *Mat.* xxv. 46.

Queſt. 29. *Wherein conſiſts the happineſs that is prepared for virtuous and good men in the future ſtate?*

Anſw. The happineſs prepared for the virtuous and good in the future ſtate, ſeems chiefly

ly to conſiſt in theſe things: in being perfectly free from all evil, whether natural or moral; in being perfectly virtuous and holy, and poſſeſſed of every thing that tends to the perfection of the human nature, and in the joyful aſſurance that this bleſſed ſtate ſhall never have an end, *Rev.* vii. 16, 17. and xiv. 13. and xxi. 4. 1 *John* iii. 2. 1 *Cor.* xiii. 8—13. 2 *Cor.* v. 1. 1 *Pet.* i. 4.

Queſt. 30. *Wherein conſiſts the miſery into which the wicked muſt paſs in the other world?*

Anſw. The miſery of the wicked, in the other world, is deſcribed in Scripture, as a worm that never dies, and a fire that never ſhall be quenched; as a lake that burneth with fire and brimſtone, which is the ſecond death; as a place of utter darkneſs, where is weeping and wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth; as a ſtate of indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh, wherein they are puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and the glory of his power; *Mark* ix. 44, 46, 48. *Rev.* xx. 15. and xxi. 8. *Matt.* xxii. 13. *Rom.* ii. 8, 9. 2 *Tim.* i. 9.

Queſt. 31. *Is not this certain information of a future State of rewards and puniſhments another powerful motive to virtue and obedience?*

Anſw. This doctrine, is indeed, another powerful motive to the practice of virtue, if

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men would ſeriouſly attend to it; for we are hereby aſſured that our obedience to the divine laws, ſhall not be unrewarded, our labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord; it is moreover, a great encouragement and ſupport to good men under the troubles and calamities of this life, eſpecially ſuch as they meet with on account of religion; and it muſt needs be matter of comfort and unſpeakable joy to a virtuous mind, to know, that when he leaves this world, he ſhall enter intn a ſtate where holineſs and virtue reign in perfection; and on the other hand, the terrors of the Lord ſet before us in the Scriptures, and threatned to all wicked men, are an awful motive to reſtrain from ſin and vice, ſuch degenerate minds as are not to be wrought upon by more nob'e motives, 1 *Cor.* xv. 58. 2 *Cor.* iv. 17, 18. *Mat.* v. 4. 2 *Cor.* v. 8. *Phil.* i. 23. 2 *Cor.* v. 11. *Heb.* x. 31. and xii. 29.

Queſt. 32. *But is not the practice of virtue attended with many advantages, even in this life? And is not this conſideration a motive likewiſe to a virtuous life?*

Anſw. It is very true, a virtuous and holy life wants not its rewards, even in this world: godlineſs is profitable unto all things, having promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come; length of days is in her right hand, and

and in her left hand riches and honour, her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace; ſo that, upon all accounts in keeping of God's commandments, there is great reward; though ſtill it is to be remembered, that the advantages of religion here, are but the foretaſtes of what we are to receive hereafter, 1 *Tim.* iv. 8. *Prov.* iii. 16, 17. *Pſal.* xix. 11.

PART III.

Of the Laws and Inſtitutions of the Chriſtian RELIGION.

Queſt. 1. *HAVE we any Abridgment of the Laws of the Chriſtian religion.*

Anſw. The moral laws, which were given to the *Jews*, being the very laws of Reaſon and nature, are alſo laws of the Chriſtian religion; and of theſe we have a ſummary in *Exod.* 20. 1---17. *God ſpake all theſe words, ſaying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of* Egypt, *out of the houſe of bondage. Thou ſhalt have no other gods before me. Thou ſhalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeneſs of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that*

is in the water under the earth. Thou ſhalt not bow down thy ſelf to them, nor ſerve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, viſiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and ſhewing mercy unto thouſands of them that love me and keep my commandments. Thou ſhalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltleſs that taketh his name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy: ſix days ſhalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the ſeventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou ſhalt not do any work, thou, nor thy ſon, nor thy daughter, thy man ſervant, nor thy maid-ſervant, nor thy cattle nor the ſtranger that is within thy gates: for in ſix days the Lord made heaven and earth, the ſea and all that in them is and reſted the ſeventh day; wherefore the Lord bleſſed the Sabath day, and hallowed it. Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. Thou ſhalt not kill. Thou ſhalt not commit adultery. Thou ſhalt not ſteal. Thou ſhalt not bear falſe witneſs againſt thy neighbour. Thou ſhalt not covet thy neighbour's houſe, thou ſhalt not covet thy neighbours wife nor his man ſervant nor his maid-ſervant, nor

his ox nor his aſs, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

All theſe are laws of reaſon and nature, if you except the fourth, which yet is ſo in part, the foundation of it, namely that ſome time ſhould be obſerved for the publick worſhip of God, and the inſtruction of mankind in religion and virtue, being a law of reaſon alſo; tho' the proportion of time, and the particular day ſet apart for publick worſhip, is indeed of poſitive inſtitution.

Our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* has alſo given us a very ſhort and plain abridgment of the laws of his religion, in *Matt.* 22. 37 --40. *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind. This is the firſt and great commandment. And the ſecond is like unto it, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf. On theſe two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* And we have another from the apoſtle *Paul*, in his epiſtle to *Titus*, *Chap.* ii. 11, 12. *The grace of God that bringeth ſalvation hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying ungodlineſs, and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world.*

Queſt. 2. *What do we chiefly learn from theſe abridgments of the divine laws?*

Anſw. From theſe abridgments of the divine

laws, we learn what ſhould be our temper and behaviour towards God, towards other men, and towards our ſelves with reference to our paſſions and appetites; which things have commonly been expreſſed by our duty towards God, our neighbour, and our ſelves.

Queſt. 3. *What ſhould be our temper and behaviour, or what is our duty towards God?*

Anſw. Our temper and behaviour towards God ſhould be this: we ſhould eſteem him as the beſt and moſt excellent of all beings, love him above all things, and have a grateful ſenſe of his benefits; we ſhould reverence and fear him, and do all to his honour and glory; carefully abſtaining from perjury, and vain ſwearing, and every thing that is contrary to that veneration that is due to him; we ſhould put our whole truſt and confidence in him, and reſign ourſelves entirely to his wiſe and good providence in all events; we ſhould worſhip him, in the beſt manner we can, acknowledging and adoring his perfections, praying to him for the ſupply of all our wants, and expreſſing our thankfulneſs to him for all his mercies and kindneſſes towards us; guarding againſt all ſorts of idolatry, and ſuperſtition, or any kind of worſhip that is unworthy of God; we ſhould believe and obey whatſoever he makes known to us, as his will; we ſhould endeavour to imitate

and

and reſemble him in his moral perfections, as far as the condition of our nature will admit; and we ſhould chuſe him for our portion and happineſs counting his favour as life, and his approbation our greateſt joy, *Pſal.* cxlv. 3. 7. 9 *Mark* xii. 29, 30. *Pſal.* ciii. 1, 2. and cxi. 10. *Heb.* xii. 28. 1 *Cor.* x. 31. *Mal.* i. 6. *Prov.* iii. 6. *James* iv. 7. *John* iv. 24. *Matth.* iv. 10. *Pſal.* cxlv. 1, 2, *&c. Matth.* vii. 7. *Eph.* v. 20. 1 *Tim.* v. 18. *John* iii. 33. *Luke* viii. 15. *Matth.* v. 48. *Eph.* v. 1. *Pſal.* lxxiii. 25, 26. and xxx. 5. and iv. 6, 7.

Queſt. 4. *What ſhould be our temper and behaviour towards other men, or what is our duty towards our neighbour?*

Anſw. The temper or behaviour we ſhould have towards other men or our duty towards our neighbour is this, that we conſider them as partakers of the human nature, and created in the image of God, as well as we, and eſteem them accordingly; that we entertain an univerſal benevolence to mankind, and be ſincerely diſpoſed to do all offices of kindneſs and friendſhip to any of them, and to promote their good and happineſs as far as we can; that we be of a publick ſpirit, and truly concerned for the common Good; and always be ready to do to others, as we ourſelves ſhould think it reaſonable and juſt that others ſhould do unto us in

the like caſe; and that we allow to all the free and peaceable enjoyment of all their rights and properties whatſoever; that we endeavour to be faithful and uſeful in every relation we may bear to others, aud render unto all that honour and reſpect, or kindneſs and condeſcenſion, that may be due to them, according to their ſeveral ſtations and relations, whether as huſbands and wives, parents and children, maſters and ſervants, magiſtrates and ſubjects, *Mal.* ii. 10. *Job.* xxxi. 15. *Rom.* xii. 9, 10. 1 *Pet.* ii. 17. *Matth.* xxii. 39. *Phil.* ii. 4. *Matt.* vii. 12. *Rom.* xiii. 1—7.

Queſt. 5. *What are the duties of huſbands and wives towards each other?*

Anſw. The duties of huſbands and wives towards each other, are theſe: to love one another fervently and affectionately; to cohabit or dwell together, and to be faithful each to the other, as to the marriage-bed; to bear with one another's infirmities, and to ſtudy to promote as far as they can, their mutual comfort and happineſs.

Q. 6. *What is the peculiar duty of the huſband?*

Anſw. It is the peculiar duty of the huſband, to maintain, protect, and defend his wife, and give honour to her as to the weaker veſſel.

Queſt. 7. *What is the peculiar duty of the wife?*

Anſw. It is the peculiar duty of the wife to reve-

reverence her huſband, and be ſubject to him in all things, that are lawful and decent; and to order the affairs of her family with prudence, diſcretion and frugality, *Eph.* v. 22—33. *Col.* iii. 18. 19. *Tit.* ii. 3. 4. 1 *Pet.* iii. 1--7.

Queſt. 8. *What is the duty of Parents towards their children?*

Anſw. It is the duty of parents to take an affectionate care of their children, in their young and tender years, and when they come to the exerciſe of reaſon, to inſtruct them in religion and virtue, and to train them up in the practice of it; to ſet them a good example in their own lives; to correct them prudently and moderately when there is occaſion for it, but not to treat them with harſhneſs and rigour; to have them taught ſome honeſt employment or buſineſs, whereby they may ſupport themſelves, and be uſeful in their generation; to give them, when they ſet out in the world, ſuch a proportion of their wealth and ſubſtance, as their circumſtances will allow; and withal, to beg the divine bleſſing upon them.

Queſt. 9. *What is the duty of children towards their parents?*

Anſw. It is the duty of children to behave towards their parents with love and gratitude, with reſpect and reverence, with obedience and ſubmiſſion; they ſhould thankfully receive their

good inſtructions and admonitions, and imitate their good example; they ſhould bear with, and modeſtly over-look their failings and infirmities, and kindly aſſiſt and comfort them, and take a tender care of them, in caſe of ſickneſs, poverty, or old age, *Eph.* vi. 1—4. *Col.* iii. 20, 21. *Pro.* xxii. 6. and xiii. 34. and xv. 5. and xxix. 15, 17. and xxx. 17. *Mat.* xv. 4, 5, 6.

Queſt. 10. *What is the duty of maſters towards their ſervants?*

Anſw. The duty of maſters towards their ſervants, is in general, To give them that which is juſt and equal, as knowing that they alſo have a maſter in heaven; and particularly, that they require no ſervices of them that are unlawful, and above their ſtrength and capacity; that they do not exact their labours with rigour and ſeverity, but treat them with moderation and humanity; that they allow them a competency of wholſome food for the nouriſhment of their bodies, and reaſonable time for ſleep and reſt, for devotion and inſtruction in religion, and that they faithfully reward them for their ſervices, and honeſtly pay them their wages.

Queſt. 11. *What is the duty of ſervants towards their maſters?*

Anſw. It is the duty of ſervants, to behave towards their maſters with ſuitable reverence and honour, not murmuring againſt them, or giving

giving them angry and diſreſpectful anſwers; they are to yield a cheerful and ready obedience to their lawful and reaſonable commands, being diligent and induſtrious in doing the work or buſineſs that is appointed them, and that whether their maſters be preſent or not, remembring that the eye of God is always upon them: they ſhould take a faithful care of what is committed to their truſt, not purloining, ſtealing, or embezling their maſter's goods themſelves, nor ſuffering others to have an opportunity of doing it, ſo far as they can prevent it, not conniving at them in any ſuch practices; and that they continue in their ſervice the time they agreed for, and do not unfairly withdraw themſelves from their maſter's yoke, *Eph.* vi. 5.—9. *Col.* iii. 22. iv. 1. 1 *Tim.* vi. 1, 2. *Tit.* ii. 9, 10. *Mal.* iii. 5 *James* v. 4. 1 *Pet.* ii 18, 19, 20.

Queſt. 12. *What is the duty of all ſupreme Governors?*

Anſw. It is the duty of all ſupreme governors, to take ſpecial care to enact no laws but what are juſt and righteous, and conducive to the good of the community; nor to impoſe any taxes, but what are neceſſary, uſeful, and reaſonable; they ought to govern their ſubjects according to the laws and conſtitutions of the nation, without aſſuming or affecting an arbi-

trary power; they are to protect their ſubjects in all their rights and privileges, having a tender concern for the preſervation of their liberties, and a ſincere regard to their welfare and happineſs in the whole of their adminiſtration.

Queſt. 13. *What is the duty of ſubordinate Magiſtrates, who are entruſted with the execution of the laws?*

Anſw. Subordinate magiſtrates, who are entruſted with the execution of the laws, ſhould be men of truth and fidelity, fearing God, and hating covetouſneſs; they ſhould adminiſter juſtice equally, impartially, and without reſpect of perſons; not juſtifying the wicked for a reward, nor taking away the righteouſneſs of the righteous from him; not regarding the rich, becauſe he is rich, nor the poor, becauſe he is poor; they ſhould diligently and faithfully put the laws in execution for the puniſhment of evil-doers, and the praiſe and protection of thoſe who do well; conſulting in all things the honour and intereſt of the government under which they act, and the good of the ſubjects that are committed to their care; remembring that they themſelves muſt give an account.

Queſt. 14. *What is the duty of ſubjects towards their governors and magiſtrates?*

A. The duty of ſubjects towards their governors and magiſtrates, is this; They ſhould honour and

and reverence their perſons, according to their ſtation and rank; not ſpeaking evil of dignities, nor treating any of them with inſolence and contempt; they ſhould cheerfully ſubmit to their government and authority, according to law, and ſo far as is conſiſtent with a good conſcience; they ſhould readily and willingly pay the taxes and tributes that are required by the laws; and they ſhould heartily recommend them in their prayers, to the conduct and protection of the Almighty, and implore his bleſſing on them and their government, *Exod.* xviii. 21. 2 *Chron.* xix. 5, 6, 7. *Mat.* xxii. 21. *Rom.* 13. 1—7. *Tit.* iii. 1. 1 *Pet.* ii. 13—17. 2 *Pet.* ii. 10. *Jude* 8. 1 *Tim.* ii. 1, 2.

Queſt. 15. *What other duties do we owe to our fellow-creatures?*

Anſw. The other duties that we owe to our fellow-creatures, of the ſame human nature with ourſelves are theſe, That we abhor murder and bloodſhed, and have a tender regard for the life and health of others, that we never attempt to violate the rights of the marriage-bed, or the chaſtity of any perſon whatſoever; that we be honeſt and juſt in all our dealings, and ready to make full reſtitution, if we have wronged any; that be we grateful to our benefactors, kind to the poor, and compaſſionate to all in diſtreſs; that we pity the ignorant, and

ſuch

ſuch as are out of the way, and endeavour by ſeaſonable inſtruction, prudent admonition, and a good example, to bring them into the paths of truth and righteouſneſs; that we have a tender regard for the character and reputation of others, and abſtain from ſlandering and reviling, or bearing falſe witneſs againſt our neighbour; that we love and ſpeak the truth, and abhor lying and diſſimulation; that we be true to any truſt committed to us, keep our words, faithfully perform our covenants and bargains, and be candid and ſincere in our whole converſation; that we be of a peaceable temper and carriage towards all men, and endeavour, as far as poſſible to promote peace and friendſhip among others; that we ſtudy to be uſeful in the world, and do good, according to our capacities and abilities, and be diligent and induſtrious in that ſtate and condition of life it may pleaſe God to carve out for us, *Mat.* v. 21, 22, 27, 28. *Luke* xix. 8. and vi. 32, 33, 34. *Col.* iii. 15. *Rom.* xii. 13. *Luke* iii 11. *Prov.* xix. 17. *Mat.* v. 7 and xxv. 35, 36. *Prov* xxvii. 5, 6. 1 *Theſſ.* v. 14. *Mat.* v. 16. *Tit.* iii. 2. *Luke* iii. 14. *Pſ.* xv. 2, 3. *Eph.* iv. 25. *Gal.* v. 22. *Phil.* iv. 8. *Rom.* xii. 18. *Matth.* v. 9. 1 *Tim.* iv. 11, 12.

Queſt. 16. *What ſhould be the temper and behaviour of every man, with reference to his ap-*

appetites and paſſions or what is the duty of every man towards himſelf?

Anſw. The duty of every one of us towards our ſelves, is, in general, this; That we ſhould conſider ourſelves as made in the image of God, having reaſonable and immortal ſouls, but lodged in frail and mortal bodies, and that therefore we ſhould endeavour by all lawful and proper means, to preſerve our lives, and to enjoy ſound minds in ſound bodies; but we ſhould eſpecially take care to provide for the happineſs of our immortal ſouls in the future ſtate; that for theſe ends we ſhould ſtudy to have our minds furniſhed with uſeful knowledge, eſpecially the knowledge of the true religion, and to cheriſh and improve all thoſe good affections, and virtuous diſpoſitions, which our wiſe and bountiful Creator has implanted in our nature, and that we ſhould endeavour ſo to govern our bodily appetites and paſſions, that we may be always ready to perform any other part of our duty, *Gen.* i. 27. *Eccl.* xii. 7. *Job* xiv. 14. *Acts* xxvii. 34. 1 *Tim.* v. 23. *Mat.* xvi. 26. *Luke* x. 42. *John* vi. 27. 2 *Pet.* i. 5. *Hoſ.* iv. 6. *Phil.* iv. 8. *Gal.* v. 24. *Col.* iii. 5.

Queſt. 17. *What are the particular duties we owe to ourſelves?*

Anſw. The particular duties we owe to our ſelves are theſe, That we ſhall not at any time be

be overcharged with ſurfeiting and drunkenneſs, but be temperate and ſober in all things; that we ſhould not be guilty of any kinds or acts of uncleanneſs, but be pure and chaſte, both in our diſpoſition and behaviour; that we ſhould not be wiſe in our own conceit, nor think of ourſelves, in any reſpect or on any account, more highly than we ought to think, but ſhould be cloathed with humility, and lowly in mind; that we ſhould not allow ourſelves to be angry without a cauſe, or in any degree that puts us beyond the uſe of our reaſon, or upon doing any thing that is contrary to it, but ſhould be meek, gentle, and long ſuffering; that we ſhould not ſuffer the ſun to go down upon our wrath, or anger to reſt in our boſom, or revenge to boil within us, but ſhould be always ready to forgive and be reconciled; that we ſhould have our converſation without covetouſneſs, and an anxious care for the world, being content with ſuch things as we have, and patient under any adverſities that may befal us, *Luke* xxi. 34. *Eph.* v. 18. *Mat.* v. 8. *Rom.* xii. 3, 16. 1 *Pet.* v. 5. *Mat.* v. 22. *Eph.* iv. 26. *Mat.* v. 5. *Gal.* v. 22, 23. *James* iii. 17. *Rom.* xii. 14, 17, 19, 20, 21. *Col.* iii. 12, 13. *Mat.* vi. 12, 14, 15. *Heb.* xiii. 5. *Phil.* iv. 6. *Mat.* vi. 25—34. *Luke* xxi. 19. 2 *Pet.* i. 7.

Queſt. 18. *What is the nature of that obedience*

ence which the goſpel requires to its laws?

Anſw. The obedience which the goſpel requires to its laws, muſt be ſincere, univerſal, conſtant, and perſevering, performed with chearfulneſs and zeal, and accompanied with courage and prudence, *Phil.* i. 10. *James* ii. 10. 1 *Cor.* xv. 58. *Gal.* v. 22. *Tit.* ii. 14. 2 *Pet.* i. 6. 1 *Cor.* xvi. 13. *Mat.* x. 6.

Queſt. 19. *Hath not God denounced fearful judgments againſt thoſe who diſobey the laws of the goſpel?*

A. Yes, he hath in divers places of the holy Scripture; particularly, in 1 *Cor.* vi. 9, 10. *Know ye not that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abuſers of themſelves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, ſhall inherit the kingdom of God,* Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. *Now the works of the fleſh are manifeſt, which are theſe; adultery, fornication, uncleanneſs, laſciviouſneſs, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, ſtrife, ſeditions, hereſies, envyings, murders, drunkenneſs, revellings, and ſuch-like; of the which I forewarn you, as I have alſo told you in time paſt, that they which do ſuch things, ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God.* Rev. xxi. 8. *But the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable,*

bominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and ſorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, ſhall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimſtone, which is the ſecond death. See alſo *Eph.* v. 3—6. *Col.* iii. 5, 6.

Queſt. 20. *How may thoſe who have been guilty of any of theſe ſins eſcape the judgment of God, and be reſtored to the divine favour?*

Anſw. All thoſe who have tranſgreſſed any of the divine laws, muſt in order to eſcape the judgments of God, and obtain his favour, heartily and ſincerely repent them of their ſins, earneſtly implore the mercy of God, through Jeſus Chriſt, and endeavour for the future, to walk in newneſs of life, *Mat.* ix. 13. *Acts* iii. 19. 1 *Cor.* vi. 11. 1 *John* i. ix. and ii. 1, 2. *Rom.* vi. 4.

Queſt. 21. *Wherein does true repentance conſiſt?*

Anſw. True repentance conſiſts in forſaking our ſins, and returning to the obedience of God's laws with our whole hearts, daily reforming whatever we find amiſs, either in our temper or converſation, and conſtantly endeavouring to overcome our infirmities, and to grow in goodneſs and virtue, *Iſ.* i. 16, 17. and lv. 7. *Prov.* xxviii. 13. *Mat.* iii. 8. 2 *Cor.* vii. 1. 2 *Pet.* iii. 18. 1 *Theſſ.* iv. 1. 2 *Pet.* i. 5, 6, 7, 8.

Queſt.

Queſt. 22. *Should not repentance be early and ſpeedy? And is there is not great danger in the delay of it?*

Anſw. There is ſuch a deceitfulneſs in ſin, ſuch a difficulty in reforming vicious habits, and our abode here is ſo ſhort and uncertain, that there is nothing more dangerous than to delay repentance; and therefore, every one ſhould ſpeedily forſake his ſins, and return without delay to the practice of virtue and righteouſneſs, *Heb.* iii. 13, 15. *Jer.* xii. 23. *Pſalm* cxix. 59, 60.

Queſt. 23. *What ſhould all, and eſpecially young people learn from the danger of delaying repentance?*

Anſw. Young people ſhould learn from this conſideration, to remember their Creator in the days of their youth, and to conſecrate the flower of their age, and the beginning of their ſtrength, to the ſervice of God, and the practice of piety and virtue; they ſhould flee youthful luſts, and all ſinful pleaſures, as knowing that for all theſe things God will bring them into judgment; they ſhould carefully avoid the ſnares they are expoſed to, eſpecially from idleneſs and bad company; and they ſhould diligently apply themſelves to ſome uſeful buſineſs, joining withal the attentive reading of the holy ſcriptures, and fervent devotion to-

towards God, *Eccl.* xi. 9. and xii. 1. 2 *Tim.* ii. 22. *Prov.* i. 10. and iv. 14, 15. and xiii. 10. *Pſalm* cxix. 9. 2 *Tim.* iii. 15.

And from the ſame conſideration, all ſhould learn to ſeek the Lord while he may be found, to call upon him while he is near, to improve their health and time, and embrace the preſent ſeaſons and opportunities of action; and to live in a conſtant expectation of their approaching diſſolution, and a due preparation for it, not knowing how ſoon the night may come upon them, when no man can work, *Iſa.* lv. 6. *Eccl.* ix. 10. *John* ix. 4.

Queſt. 24. *But are there not ſome duties required of us towards* Jeſus Chriſt, *as our Mediator?*

Anſw. Yes, there are, and they are chiefly theſe; That we believe in him, and receive him as our prophet, prieſt, and king; aſſenting to all the doctrines he hath taught us, endeavouring to imitate his example, looking for the pardon of ſin, and acceptance with God, only thro' the efficacy of his ſacrifice and interceſſion; honouring and adoring him as our Lord and king, and being obedient to the laws of his kingdom; that we love him ſincerely, and have a thankful ſenſe of his kindneſs and benefits to us; that we acknowledge him before men, and make public profeſſion of his religion; that we be ready,

ready, if called to it, to deny ourſelves, to take up our croſs and follow him; and that expecting him to be our final judge, we rejoice in him, in hope of that eternal reward he will beſtow on us in that day, *John* i. 12. and xiii. 15. 1 *John* ii. 6. *Eph.* i. 6, 7. *John* v. 22, 23. *Mat.* xi. 28, 29, 30. 1 *Pet.* i. 8. *Mark* viii. 34, 38. *Rev.* i. 6. and v. 9, 10, 12, 13.

Queſt. 25. *And are there not ſome duties incumbent on us, with relation to the holy Spirit?*

Anſw. Our duty, with relation to the holy Spirit, is to receive with faith, love and reverence, thoſe holy oracles that were given by his inſpiration; to pray for his aſſiſtance to ſubdue our corruptions, and to attain to an habit of holineſs and virtue; not to reſiſt, quench, or grieve the Spirit, or, by any deliberate or habitual ſins, to provoke him to depart from us, but to give up our ſelves to his guidance, and keep our ſouls and bodies as meet temples and habitations for him to dwell in, and to abound in his fruits, 2 *Tim.* iii. 15, 16, 17. *Luke* xi. 13. *Acts* vii. 51. *Eph.* iv. 30. 1 *Tim.* v. 19. 1 *Cor.* vi, 19. *Eph.* ii. 22. and v. 9, 18. *Gal*, v, 22, 23.

Queſt. 26. *What inſtructions has our Lord given us concerning the duty of prayer?*

Anſw. He hath taught us to pray after this manner; *Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will*

be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever; Amen. *Mat.* vi. 9---13.

Queſt. 27. *What do we chiefly deſire of God in this prayer?*

Anſw. In this prayer we chiefly aſk of God, our heavenly father, who is the giver of all good, that he would grant unto us, and to all men, that we may worſhip and obey him, as we ought to do; that to this end he would ſend his goſpel through the world, that all the inhabitants of the earth may come to the knowledge of the truth; that he would be pleaſed to grant us thoſe things that are needful for the ſupport of our lives; that he would be merciful to us in the pardon of our ſins, and give us grace to obey him for the time to come; that he would keep us from the power of temptation, deliver us from every evil way and work, and preſerve us to his heavenly kingdom. 2 *Tim.* iii. 1. *Acts* xiv. 17. *Heb.* iv. 16. *Matt.* 26. 41. 2 *Tim.* iv. 18.

Queſt. 28. *What further directions hath he given us concerning the performance of divine worſhip?*

Anſw. He hath directed us to perform divine

vine worſhip, and offer up all our prayers, praiſes and thankſgivings unto God, our heavenly father, in the name of *Jeſus Chriſt*, our bleſſed mediator, and by the aſſiſtance of the holy Spirit, *John* xvi. 23, 24. *Col.* iii. 17. *Eph.* ii. 18.

Queſt. 29. *Are we not required in ſcripture, to have publick aſſemblies for the worſhip of God and our inſtruction in religion?*

Anſw. It appears from ſeveral paſſages of holy ſcripture, that it is our duty to aſſemble ourſelves together in united ſocieties for publick worſhip and inſtruction; and it is very agreeable to the light of nature that we ſhould do ſo; and the firſt day of the week, commonly called the Lord's-day, has been, in all ages of the church, ſet apart for that end, *Acts* ix. 31. xiii. 1. and xiv. 23, 27. and xv. 35, 41. and vi. 5. and xx. 17, 28. 1 *Cor.* xi. 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 33, 34. and xiv. 5, 19, 23, 26 -- 35 and xvi. 1, 19. *Gal.* i. 2-- 22. 1 *Tim.* i. 1. *Heb.* x. 19--- 25. *James* i. 21. and ii. 2, 3. *John* vi. 9. *Rev.* i. 4, 20.

Queſt. 30. *Do not the ſcriptures make mention of an order of men to preſide in chriſtian aſſemblies, and inſtruct them in religion?*

Anſw. The Scriptures ſpeak frequently of an order of men, whoſe buſineſs it is to inſtruct the people committed to their care in the doctrines of the chriſtian religion, and to perſwade them

them to the practice of holineſs and virtue; to preſide in the ſeveral parts of publick worſhip, and in the exerciſe of diſcipline, according to the laws of Chriſt, and they are commonly called by the names of paſtors and teachers, and miniſters of the goſpel: and this alſo is very agreeable to the light of nature, being uſeful for the decent and orderly performance of publick worſhip, and to preſerve the knowledge and ſenſe of religion in the world. *Acts* xiii. 1. and xiv. 23. and xx. 17, 28. *Eph.* iv. 11, 12. *Phil.* i. 1. 1 *Tim.* v. 17, 19. 1 *Theſſ.* v. 12, 13. 1 *Tim.* iii. 1---7. 2 *Tim.* ii. 2. *Titus* i. 5---9. *Heb.* xiii. 7, 17, 24. *James* v. 14. 1 *Pet.* v. 1---4.

Queſt. 31. *But ſhould not fathers and heads of families, perform religious worſhip, with the members of their families, and inſtruct them, as well as they are able, in religion and virtue? and ſhould not every one practice devotion in ſecret?*

Anſw. The practice of family-worſhip and inſtruction, as alſo of ſecret devotion, being very conducive to preſerve in the minds of men a conſtant ſenſe of religion and virtue, in the midſt of their worldly affairs, it is plainly the intereſt, as well as the duty of every one, carefully to obſerve it; and they ſhould perform ſuch duties with ſeriouſneſs, reverence and attention.

Queſt.

Queſt. 32. *Hath* Chriſt *appointed any rite of admiſſion into his church?*

Anſw. Yes he hath appointed baptiſm; that is, being waſhed with water in (or into) the name of the father, the ſon, and the holy Ghoſt, in token of becoming the diſciples of Chriſt, members of his church, and obliged to obey his laws, *Matt.* xxviii. 18, 19, 20.

Queſt. 33. *Hath* Chriſt *appointed any memorial of his own ſufferings and death?*

Anſw. He hath commanded us to take bread and wine, and, having given thanks, to eat of the bread, and drink of the wine, with reverence and devotion, in thankful remembrance that he died for us, and in token of our fellowſhip with him as our head and king, and with all our chriſtian brethren, as members of the ſame body, and ſubjects of the ſame kingdom: *Matt.* xxvi. 26, 27, 28. 1 *Cor.* xi. 23---29. and x. 16, 17.

Queſt. 34. *What is required of thoſe who come to the Lords ſupper?*

Anſw. It is required of thoſe who would come to the Lord's Supper, or perform any other part of divine worſhip in an acceptable manner, to examine themſelves, whether they repent them truly of their former ſins, ſtedfaſtly purpoſing, and ſincerely endeavouring, to lead a new life; whether they have a thankful

ful remembrance of the death of *Chriſt*, and a juſt ſenſe of the advantages we enjoy by the goſpel: and whether they have a ſincere love to their chriſtian brethren, and to all men, 1 *Cor.* v. 7, 8. and xi. 28.

Queſt. 35. *What is the chief deſign of the goſpel inſtitutions?*

Anſw. The chief deſign of the inſtitutions of the goſpel is, to preſerve always, in the minds of men, lively and ſerious impreſſions of the being and providence of God, the certainty of a future ſtate, the obligations of religion, and the great advantages of an holy and virtuous life; that, by all theſe means, they may be rendered uſeful and ſerviceable one to another, while they are here, and may be prepared and qualified for eternal happineſs hereafter. *Eph.* iv. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

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